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READINGS FOR

STUDENTS

"The virtue  
of books is the  
perfecting of  
reason, which is  
indeed the hap-  
piness of man."

*Richard De  
Bury.*

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"On bokès for  
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*Chaucer.*









Of his first meeting with Johnson Boswell says, concerning this portrait: 'I found that I had a very perfect idea of Johnson's figure from the portrait of him painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds soon after he had published his *Dictionary* in the attitude of sitting in his easy chair in deep meditation, which was the first picture his friend did for him, which Sir Joshua very kindly presented to me, and from which an engraving has been made for this work.'



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SELECTIONS

FROM THE WORKS OF

SAMUEL JOHNSON

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

CHARLES GROSVENOR OSGOOD

*Preceptor in English in Princeton University*



NEW YORK

HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

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## PREFACE

ONE day at Mrs. Thrale's, Johnson remarked, in an 'indulgent humor': 'I think there is no impropriety in a man's publishing as much as he chooses of any author, if he does not put the rest out of the way.' His words lend one perhaps the best excuse for a book of this kind. It is in the hope of putting the rest *in* the way that these selections have been gathered and edited; and enough will have been done, if they should prove the means of correcting some error of vision, or of helping to find life in that which has seemed dead.

The introduction may appear at times too emphatic and opinionated, or too condensed and barren of illustration. But opinion often creates opinion in others, if only by reaction; and such passages as those on Johnson's style or his theory of criticism, or on the poetry of his time, may suggest to teachers various useful and agreeable studies in quest of illustration and evidence.

*Rasselas* is unrepresented because it has been well edited in this series by Professor Emerson. The selections are entire, except the *Life of Addison*, from which the long quotation of Dennis's tedious remarks on *Cato* has been in large part omitted. No biographical sketch of Johnson beyond a chronological outline has seemed necessary. If a shorter account than Boswell's is desired, it may be found in Sir Leslie Stephen's *Life of Johnson* (*English Men of Letters*), or, shorter still, in his article in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Macaulay may be read with interest, but not for Johnson's sake.



The memory of Dr. G. Birkbeck Hill is, by his noble work as an editor and essayist, already inseparable from that of Boswell and Johnson, and cannot but be affectionately honored by every devoted reader of their works. No man will ever have done so much and so well as he to make their companionship accessible and familiar to those who need it and enjoy it. An editor of Johnson must henceforth be deeply in debt to him; and while it is easy to acknowledge definite borrowings, it is hard to measure or describe the inspiration and insight which one owes to his labors.

I wish to thank Mr. A. Edward Newton for the portraits which accompany this edition; and Professor Lane Cooper for a careful criticism of the Introduction.

*Princeton, July 31, 1909.*

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# INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

## I

It has been a custom for nearly one hundred years to denounce the Eighteenth Century; and one of the loudest accusers is Carlyle. He was, to be sure, more deeply interested in that period than in any other, and he devoted to it the most brilliant and elaborate of his historical studies. But he did not approve of it. Whatever he disliked was to him characteristic of the Eighteenth Century; whatever he liked was an exception to it. He calls it 'the sceptical century'; 'opulent in accumulated falsities'; 'swindling,' 'spendthrift'; 'unheroic, godless'; 'a time of quacks and quackery'; 'unbelieving'; 'mechanical'; 'prosaic'; 'selfish'; 'trivial'; 'a decrepit, death-sick Era of Cant.' This clamor has flown from mouth to mouth, and reverberates even to the present in well-worn epithets and vain repetitions of criticism. Johnson's time is still spoken of as the Age of Doubt; the Age of Reason; the Age of Pseudo-classicism, or of Artificiality; with other nicknames of a like sort. Nicknames are perhaps never quite fair; they exaggerate, caricature, or disparage, but they never tell the whole truth, and often not the most important part of it.

During such leisure, then, as we find for the study

<sup>1</sup> References are often given to the *Life* (Dr. Hill's edition of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*; to *Misc.* (*Johnsonian Miscellanies*, edited by Hill); to *Lett.* (*The Letters of Samuel Johnson*, edited by Hill); and to the *Lives* (*Johnson's Lives of the Poets*, edited by Hill).



of Johnson's time, it will be better to forget the nicknames and denunciations, and to contemplate with open mind some of the great achievements of that age; nor will it be necessary to look for them far beyond Johnson's circle.

It was the time when Reynolds and Gainsborough were painting portraits full of inexhaustible beauty and charm; when Goldsmith was creating his exquisite masterpieces in *genre*; when Burke was expressing his noble thought in classic eloquence; when Gibbon led forth the gorgeous but fading pageant of ancient Rome. Little or none of their essential greatness do these achievements owe to mere Reason, or Doubt, or Pseudo-classicism.

More notable than these are the deeds, opinions, and character of Johnson, together with his portrait from Boswell's hand. Modern haste and prejudice have done much to warp our notions of Boswell and Johnson. A passing glance at Boswell's masterpiece, an amused impression of Macaulay's brilliant caricature, are about the sum of the common ignorance of Johnson. To most men he is a ponderous, uncouth, slovenly figure, gruff, ill-mannered, absent, unapproachable, unconsciously funny, blurting out his prejudices in unwieldy periods, and chiefly celebrated for sitting up late, drinking infinite tea, and writing an obsolete dictionary. And if aught else beside, he is a hide-bound Tory and Jacobite, hating all Whigs, Scots, French, and Americans, puffed up with insular pride, indifferent to the beauties of nature, to the arts, to all the finer things of life; venting himself in pedantic bombast and prosy moralistic abstractions, which have long since been relegated to the rubbish-heap of literature.

There is but one way to understand a great portrait, whether it be the work of pencil or pen. Sit down patiently and open-mindedly before it; return to it from time to time; consider it familiarly, as if it were

in the flesh—as if, for example, you were yourself living in Johnson's time; imagine yourself in his place, or him in yours. Then the merely grotesque and whimsical traits begin to fade, the superficial and illusory veil is slowly withdrawn, as a living man comes forth to meet us, full of life, strength, charm, and even of kindness and affection. He may indeed become what he has already been for many—the advisor, consoler, and intimate friend. There lives, for example, in a large American city, a busy man of affairs, who has essentially educated himself through years of deepening familiarity with Boswell's *Life of Johnson*. Since early manhood he has found for his scant leisure no other literary companion so responsive. At the age of thirty-one Stevenson wrote to a friend that he was reading *Boswell* 'daily by way of a Bible; I mean to read *Boswell* now until the day I die.'<sup>1</sup> Sir Leslie Stephen said: 'I had the good fortune when a boy, to read what is to me, I must confess, the most purely delightful of all books—I mean Boswell's *Life of Johnson*. I read it from cover to cover, backward and forward, over and over, through and through, till I nearly knew it by heart.'<sup>2</sup> 'On his deathbed,' says his biographer, 'he suffered little pain. He could see a friend almost every day. He was surrounded by the tenderest love and devotion, and he still could read.' Here follows a considerable list of authors. 'Then, when other books failed, he fell back upon the old, old story. Need I name it? He told his nurse that his enjoyment of books had begun, and would end with Boswell's *Life of Johnson*.'<sup>3</sup>

## II

It is commonly said, after Macaulay, that Johnson lives only in Boswell, while his own books are dead,

<sup>1</sup> *Letters* 2. 133.

<sup>2</sup> Maitland, *Life and Letters of Leslie Stephen*, p. 39.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 486.

as they deserve to be; that had it not been for Boswell, Johnson would be now comparatively unheard of. Johnson's works are overshadowed by his conversations in the *Life*, but had the *Life* never been written, yet such is the vigor and sanity of his writings that they must have found many readers who now know Johnson only as revealed by his devoted friend. At any rate they furnish the best commentary on Boswell's portrayal, and in many essential ways supplement it. Without them one's acquaintance is imperfect. Even Boswell, who knew Johnson's conversation better than any one else could, was a devoted student of his works; and an unprejudiced reader must find in them as great a Johnson as Boswell has shown us, expressed with as much clearness, originality, and power, and often with greater eloquence.

In some sense every great man is greater than his works, and genius humbles itself to every form of expression it employs. But Johnson's genius humbled itself more than that of most writers, both in his books and his conversation. At the conclusion of *The Rambler* he wrote: 'Though in every long work there are some joyous intervals of self-applause, when the attention is recreated by unexpected facility, and the imagination soothed by incidental excellencies; yet that toil with which performance struggles after the idea is so irksome and disgusting, and so frequent is the necessity of resting below the perfection we imagined within our reach, that seldom any man obtains more from his endeavors than a painful conviction of his defects, and a continual resuscitation of desires which he feels himself unable to gratify.' Johnson chose no one great literary form in which to excel; he wrote but little verse, nor was that his best work. He did not write for the love of it. 'No man but a blockhead ever wrote, except for money.'<sup>1</sup> 'You may have pleasure from writing after it is over, if

<sup>1</sup> *Life* 3. 19.

you have written well; but you don't go willingly to it again.'<sup>1</sup> His actual writing was not the uncontrollable exuberance of pent-up feeling or conviction. It was done partly to earn his living, partly from sense of necessity that he should cast into some permanent form the exceptional gifts that he had received from nature. His superiority to his works no doubt owed something to his natural laziness. He praised others for long and careful elaboration of their works; his own were written with incredible speed, and often went to the press without his perusal.<sup>2</sup> But disappointing as they were to him, they are an opening, however confined, through which the full stature of the man is discernible.

Johnson was the man of letters, a literary Jack-of-all-trades—reviewer, poet, dramatist, essayist, lexicographer, narrator, critic, biographer, letter-writer, composer of prayers for himself, and of dedications, prologues, and epitaphs for others; and if he did not succeed equally in all ways, yet each species of his composition is a facet of the whole mind of the man, adding something to the lustre of his genius.

<sup>1</sup> *Life* 4. 219.

<sup>2</sup> 'His most excellent works were struck off at a heat, with rapid exertion' (*Life* 1. 71). Malone makes this note: 'He told Dr. Burney that he never wrote any of his works that were printed twice over. Dr. Burney's wonder at seeing several pages of his *Lives of the Poets* in manuscript, with scarce a blot or erasure, drew this observation from him.' To this Dr. Hill has added the following note: '"He wrote forty-eight of the printed octavo pages of the *Life of Savage* at a sitting" (*Life* 1. 166), and a hundred lines of the *Vanity of Human Wishes* in a day" (*ibid.* 2. 15). The *Ramblers* "were written in haste as the moment pressed, without even being read over by him before they were printed" (1. 203). In the second edition, however, he made corrections. "He composed *Rasselas* in the evenings of one week" (1. 341). "*The False Alarm* was written between eight o'clock on Wednesday night and twelve o'clock on Thursday night" (Piozzi's *Anecdotes*, p. 41). "*The Patriot*," he says, "was called for on a Friday, was written on a Saturday" (2. 288).

## III

*London* and *The Vanity of Human Wishes* are the best known of Johnson's few attempts in verse. For some sixty or seventy years it had been the fashion to 'imitate' Latin writers of the Empire, that is, to adapt the ideas and illustrations of some selected poem to contemporary life. The practice was much stimulated by Pope's brilliant *Imitations of Horace*. Such a performance was of course purely academic, and in Johnson's case, as in many another, it served only as a kind of test of his right to recognition in the literary world. 'No man ever became great by imitation,' says Johnson,<sup>1</sup> and his own imitations, so far as they imitate, exhibit only his cleverness. Nobody would recognize this sooner than he. Of poetic imitation in general his estimate was low. Thirty years later he must have had his own imitations in mind when he spoke thus in his *Life of Pope*: 'What is easy is seldom excellent; such imitations cannot give pleasure to common readers; the man of learning is sometimes surprised and delighted by an unexpected parallel; but the comparison requires knowledge of the original which will likewise often detect strained applications. Between Roman images and English manners there will be an irreconcilable dissimilitude, and the work will be generally uncouth and parti-colored; neither original nor translated, neither ancient nor modern.'

Furthermore Johnson's imitations bear most of the external marks of 'Eighteenth Century poetry.' For half a century and more poetry had suffered from the habit of proceeding from the abstract to the concrete, from the general to the particular. A poet chooses as his subject some general or abstract topic, and his poem must be made up of well-arranged concrete illustrations or 'images' suggested by the general sub-

<sup>1</sup>Below, 139. 16: *Rasselas*, chap. 10. cf. XXVI.

ject. Hence poems on Women, Riches, Dunces, Seasons, and the Pleasures of Hope, each subject abundantly illustrated by a collection of idylls, stories, or descriptions. On the other hand, *Macbeth*, *Paradise Lost*, and *The Ring and the Book* proceed in the opposite direction, choosing one concrete instance from human life, but leaving the hearer to generalize from the particular instance described. In Goldsmith's poems there is a conflict of the two methods. *The Traveler* recommended itself to contemporaries as a philosophic poem on Government; *The Deserted Village* as a treatise on Luxury and Emigration. But Goldsmith's genius forsook him in the abstract parts of the poem, and spent itself with so much power on his illustrations, that *they* constitute the real poem, and through his landscapes in the *Traveler*, or his miniature of Auburn, or his portrait of the old parson, we discern elemental truths of life far deeper and greater than the professed theories of the poems. After the manner of the times, Johnson's *London* is on the general subject, London, and is composed of detailed illustrations of London as seen or imagined by the clever literary novice of 1738. *The Vanity of Human Wishes* proceeds to illustrate its general subject with concrete examples suggested by those in the tenth satire of Juvenal.

To the poet of the Eighteenth Century arrangement and transition were very important. His examples must be neatly arranged in natural order, and joined by easy transitions. Hence such unity as his poem possessed.<sup>1</sup> The real form and unity that arise only from one dominant and supreme emotion within they seldom show. Johnson's two imitations had only to follow Juvenal in each case to realize the artificial unity; but of the two, only *The Vanity of Human Wishes* can be said to contain sufficiently deep and steady conviction and feeling to attain to real unity.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Johnson's criticism of Savage, p. 250.

Further traits of the times these poems show in their use of stock poetic words and phrases; of incessant personification that does not personify. Each noun must have its epithet—'rosy' lips, 'radiant' eyes, and 'modest' innocence—after the late classical manner. Each vowel must have its right place in the succession of sounds in the line; each thought and phrase and cadence must be confined within the balance of the rimed couplet.

This form of poetic composition cast a deep spell upon five or six generations of our ancestors, but its charm is now departed. No longer can it captivate the ear, or stir the imagination, as once it did. The modern reader makes nothing of it but a monotonous sing-song. We do injustice to the rimed couplet, and the chief reason is that the art of reading aloud, and the art of listening, have declined almost to extinction, so that the ear is no longer discerning. We read with the eye; in Johnson's time they read with the ear. To the eye Johnson's cadences mean nothing, and he who can make us hear them as Johnson could have done is not to be found. Only by the most practised and measured utterance of his numbers, with lively auricular imagination, can we begin to realize the sonorous power and rhythmic charm that lay in the rimed couplet as conceived by Dryden or Johnson. It was not, to be sure, an instrument for the tumultuous and intermittent feelings of modern poetry; but the constant, deep, and mature emotions that belong to the even temperament, or rest upon long experience, it conveys with great power.

When the inferior elements of imitation and mannerism have been subtracted from Johnson's satires, there yet remains something nobly genuine. *London* is vitalized with a strong man's spirited resistance. He repels the obstacles which the age throws in the way of real manhood. He struggles to cast off the weight which is crushing many choice spirits of his time; and he con-

tends neither in confidence nor in despair, but with indomitable energy. In *London* he did not discern the nature of his antagonists. The increasing foreign element, and the domination of Sir Robert Walpole, were not the real evils of the times, as he soon learned. But his energy and courage, however misdirected in this case, were permanent elements of nobleness in his character, which asserted themselves with greater effect on every right occasion throughout the rest of his life.

*The Vanity of Human Wishes* is wiser, more natural, more deeply impassioned than *London*. The harsh irritation of Johnson's earlier hardships has subsided, and his sympathy is broader and more profound. Its most original and greatest passages<sup>1</sup> are filled with tender pity for the weakness of even the strongest man, and for the futility of unaided human effort to subdue the dominant forces of the world. These lines came spontaneously from a full heart. As one grows familiar with their solemn cadence, and touched with their feeling, he ceases to wonder that the poem was a favorite of the romanticists Scott and Byron, or that Johnson himself, as he was once reciting the lines on a young aspirant to a scholar's fame, faltered, and burst into tears.

## IV -

While Johnson was engaged on his *Dictionary*, his mind found release and recreation from such exacting labor in the semi-weekly essays of *The Rambler*. Goldsmith spoke in the name of his own generation at least, when he said that Johnson's fame was based upon these essays. Though hurriedly written, for the immediate purpose of getting bread and butter, yet they are not slovenly or unfinished. His well-known haste in composition is more apparent than real. He was

<sup>1</sup> Those on patronage (73-82), on the pride of learning (135-164), on military pride (191-222), on the helplessness of man (346-356).



above forty when he began *The Rambler*. Up to this time his writings had been almost entirely of ephemeral nature. There had been slothful lapses of his energy, for which, even in the days of his poverty, he bitterly reproached himself. But these years had not been so fruitlessly spent as he imagined; they were really a period of slow elaboration through experience, thought, and assimilation, and from these sprang his permanent work, mature in energy and form. However brief the time of execution, his writing was thus saved from shallowness, nonsense, or the impotence of a perfunctory effort.

As in his satires he imitated Juvenal, so in *The Rambler* he imitated Addison. His account of the origin of the periodical essay in his *Life of Addison*, and his appreciation of *The Spectator* there expressed, show his great admiration of Addison's work. But his imitation of Addison is after all external. He chose the literary form which Addison perfected—a choice determined more by material necessity, than by mere admiration or the affinity of genius. Beyond this Addison indicated the general range of topics for treatment, and now and then furnished him with a definite subject.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Speaking of the origin of his essays Johnson says in *The Rambler* 184: 'A careless glance upon a favorite author, or transient survey of the varieties of life, is sufficient to supply the first hint or seminal idea.' The most obvious hint that he got from earlier periodical writers came from Addison's series of criticisms on *Paradise Lost* in *The Spectator*. Milton was still a popular poet in the days of the *Rambler* (R.), and Johnson wrote five essays on the versification of Milton, and two on *Samson Agonistes*. Other subjects which may have been wholly or in part suggested by *The Tatler* (T.) and *The Spectator* (S.) are: Pastoral Poetry (R. 36, 37; cf. T. 143; *Guardian*, *passim*); Death of Friends (R. 54, *Idler* (I). 90; cf. T. 114, 181; S. 349); Virtuosos (R. 82, 83; cf. T. 216, 221); Prostitution (R. 107, 170, 171; cf. S. 190); Degeneracy of the Stage (R. 133; cf. T. 108; S. 446, 592); Beauty destroyed by Smallpox (R. 133; cf. S. 306); Epistolary Prose (R. 152; cf. Epistolary Verse, S. 618); Bashfulness (R. 157, 159; cf. S. 148); Test of Purity by Abraham's Magnet (R. 199; cf. S. 579); Characters in a Stage-Coach (*Adventurer* (A.) 84; cf. T. 192;

Johnson also employs many of the well-tried expedients of his predecessors, such as Oriental tales, allegory, dreams, letters, and frequent quotation from Seneca and 'Tully,' authors for whom he seems not otherwise to have had any especial liking; his citations from modern authors are much more extensive and varied than in the earlier periodicals.

But Johnson's best papers are on subjects spontaneously chosen. Now and then he cites a remark from Addison, but Addison's influence upon him in this respect is no greater than that of Dryden, Bacon, Seneca, or many others whom he cites in the same casual manner.

The essays printed in this volume will illustrate the narrow range of Johnson's topics. For this and for his prevailing seriousness he was constantly censured, and he acknowledged the truth of both criticisms with

*S.* 242); Itch of Writing (*A.* 115; cf. *S.* 582); Singularity (*A.* 131; *S.* 576); Amazons (*I.* 5; cf. *S.* 433, 434); Newspapers (*I.* 7; cf. *T.* 18, 19, 42, 178; *S.* 452); Experiences of Servants (*I.* 26, 29; cf. *S.* 96, 137); Advertisements (*I.* 40; cf. *T.* 224, 228, 245); Terrific Diction (*I.* 36, 70; cf. *T.* 230, 244); Dick Minim (*I.* 60, 61; cf. Sir Timothy Tittle, *T.* 165); Indian's Opinion of the English (*I.* 81; cf. *S.* 50); Oratory (*I.* 9; cf. *T.* 66, 70, 72; *S.* 407, 633); see also Notes in this edition on the Essays. Other subjects are common to two essayists, the choice of which is more likely to have been determined by Johnson's natural preoccupation with them, than from the mere suggestion of his predecessors. The following may be noted: Education, especially the Education of Women; Good Nature and Good Humor; Value of Time and Dangers of Idleness; Affectation; Marriage; Domestic Conditions; Poverty; Fame; Friendship; Vanity of Human Wishes; Retirement from Active Life; Irksomeness of Country Life; Political Newsmongery; English Language. This rough sketch of Johnson's indebtedness to his forerunners will serve to show the general extent of his borrowings. It appears that *The Rambler* owes more to *The Spectator*, and *The Idler* to *The Tatler*, both in matter and manner; and that Steele's help was quite as important to Johnson as Addison's.

his usual indifference; at the same time he realized that, to be anything at all, he must be himself and not affect the style or practice of another. In *The Rambler* his essays are longer than Addison's, and often slower in getting under way; not infrequently his first paragraph is superfluous. On the other hand he maintains stricter unity than his predecessors, who sometimes throw together in one essay letters and remarks on several unrelated subjects. Such informality was affected by Johnson but three or four times, and then under protest.<sup>1</sup> The geniality and gaiety which have made Addison so popular are not characteristic of Johnson; even in the shorter and livelier papers of *The Idler* there is greater weight and moral significance than is common in Addison.

The best, as well as the greatest number, of Johnson's essays are generally confined to three subjects: characters and pictures of his time; literature; and the philosophy of life. Of these the first prevailingly deal with men and women of the middle class, wise and foolish. Merchants, housekeepers, servants, prisoners for debt, fops and flirts and matrons of a rich bourgeois society, country folk, squires, wits, critics, students, booksellers, shopkeepers, prostitutes—all these and more he selects from the middle and lower range of life in London, which he had studied long and well. His interest in this class, often remarked by Boswell, was not the condescending observation or curiosity of a man of the world, but came from his heart. In the well-appointed households of the Burneys or the Thrales, Johnson is a familiar figure; more familiar still is he as the centre of a circle including most of the greatest English men of genius in his day. He is more than once seen accepting the tribute of attention amid an adoring little group of Blue Stockings, or in quiet dignity at the exalted dinner-table of Lady Craven.

<sup>1</sup> *Rambler* 107, 126, 155, 156.

In such surroundings it is easy to overlook his deep longing for near and domestic companionship of another and humbler sort. Not only did he tolerate in his household a lot of feeble, wrangling old women, and a blundering half-quack, but he could not easily have dispensed with them; he loved them for their very infirmities. To them he returned gladly from London high life, and with them found peculiar comfort and consolation.<sup>1</sup>

From such affections and associations as these came Johnson's studies of life and character in his essays. Unlike *The Spectator*, he seldom aimed to correct merely the superficial and rather harmless follies of his time; there is no flutter of fans and rustle of petticoats in his little scenes, no glamor or artificial illumination. Johnson saw everything in the merciless light of common day, yet with imagination; and, seeing thus soberly, he could but repeat his protest against all sham and pretense, and utter his pity for human triviality and disillusionment. Mainly by this trait of his genius he has drawn to himself his many pupils in the art of living.

If the essays seem monotonous in subject, the reason lies in their strongly autobiographical character. They came out of his own life, and, however abstract their style may become at times, they are capable of abundant

<sup>1</sup> To this same group belonged his pompous and devoted little landlord, Allen, the printer. For nearly thirty years their friendship grew and deepened; how it was nourished from Allen's side we can only wonder; but when he died, Johnson grieved many days for one of his best and tenderest friends (*Life* 4. 354). In the last years of Johnson's life, it was his custom, especially on his birthday, to give dinners at home for these lowly associates. He writes to his black protégé, Barber: 'As Thursday is my birthday, I would have a dinner got, and would have you invite Mrs. Desmoulins, Mrs. Davis, that was about Mrs. Williams, and Mr. Allen, and Mrs. Gardiner.' Mrs. Davis, says Miss Burney, was 'a good sort of woman,' 'a charitable soul,' and Mrs. Gardiner was 'a tallow-chandler on Snow-hill' (*Life* 3. 22), 'not in the learned way, but a worthy good woman' (*Life* 1. 242).

illustration from Boswell that will fill them with interest and significance. The discipline that qualifies for literary success; the struggle to free oneself from servility to rich patrons, or from slavish thirst for popularity; a manly and independent front to the enemy in the fight of life; courage, especially in defeat, disappointment, infirmity, or bereavement; the futility of despair; the consolation of friends, or conversation, or books, or work, or resources within oneself; the transcendent consolation of faith—these are Johnson's themes, whether he speaks in the person of critic, moralist, humorist, story-teller, or impersonator.<sup>1</sup>

His greatest dignity, eloquence, and wit Johnson attains in his more abstract essays on the philosophy of life. At first they seem dry and hard to follow or remember—the talk of a dull old man. But they should not be taken in too rapid succession; they should be read aloud, evenly and with feeling, for the sake of their broad undulation and cadence. Only thus can their music and their emotional power be appreciated. No one has fairly tested them unless he has read them as they were first written to be read—one at a time—and at intervals. *Rasselas* and *The Rambler* should lie on the library table, or drop easily into the pocket. In an odd moment, during a lull in the ordinary pre-occupation of life, open the book by chance, and begin reading as the eye lights upon the page. Johnson's words, thus caught in passing, are nearly always instinct with freshness and sagacious sense.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In these and all considerations of Johnson's essays *Rasselas* should not be forgotten, as it is really a series of moral essays strung on a rather slender thread of narrative.

<sup>2</sup> So Ruskin thought. In his charming autobiography (chap. 12) he tells how 'on our foreign journeys, it being of course desirable to keep the luggage as light as possible, my father had judged that four little volumes of Johnson—*The Idler* and *The Rambler*—did, under names wholly appropriate to the circumstances, contain more substantial literary nourishment than could be, from any other author, packed into so portable

## V

Johnson lived in an age of biography and portraiture which culminated in the great *Life* of which he was the subject, and which he directly inspired, and in part created. For, besides being its subject, he seems to have known Boswell's intention of writing his life, to have furnished him abundant material on request, and to have read over many of his notes. Furthermore, he was a frequent prompter of Boswell's genius, in their discussions of the art and aim of biographical writing, and through his written opinions on that subject. If Johnson had a ruling literary passion, it was a passion for biography. The biographical part of literature, he says, 'is what I love most.'<sup>1</sup> His reason almost goes without saying. 'I esteem biography as giving us what comes near to ourselves, what we can turn to use.'<sup>2</sup> Only one biography of the first order can be written by one man. The execution requires such devotion, affection, self-sacrifice, and contemplation of the subject, that it could not be otherwise. Johnson had too independent and dominant a nature to make the necessary surrender. Yet he believed that his literary strength lay especially in biographical writing. As achievements in literature his *Lives of the Poets* may not be compared with such great single portraits as

compass. And accordingly, in spare hours, on wet days, the turns and returns of the reiterated *Rambler* and iterated *Idler* fastened themselves in my ears and mind.' 'I hold it more than happy that, during those continental journeys in which the vivid excitement of the greater part of the day left me glad to give spare half-hours to the study of a thoughtful book, Johnson was the one author accessible to me. No other writer could have secured me as he did, against all chance of being misled by my own sanguine and metaphysical temperament. He taught me carefully to measure life, and distrust fortune, and he secured me, by his adamant common sense, for ever, from being caught in the cobwebs of German metaphysics, or sloughed in the English drainage of them.'

<sup>1</sup> *Life* 1. 425.

<sup>2</sup> *Life* 5. 79.

Boswell's or Lockhart's. No doubt they are as enthusiastic; but Boswell's enthusiasm was an enthusiasm for Johnson, and Lockhart's an enthusiasm for Scott, whereas Johnson's is rather an enthusiasm for biography in general. While he wrote no one great biography, yet his biographical writings are informed with true greatness. He valued biography chiefly as a commentary on life; the autobiographical element in his *Lives* is large, and the shadow of his own struggle as a man of letters falls heavily across them. They vary greatly in length and formality; some are mere jottings of scant information; others, such as the *Life of Addison*, exhibit larger proportions and higher finish.

Johnson's intellectual habit throughout his life was critical and judicial, rather than creative or pictorial. He transcends his biographical subject more than he enters into it; and the real greatness in his biographies is his own, not that of the man whose life he is writing. As repositories of facts gleaned and saved from oral tradition, their value is high, but aside from this they will ever be read for Johnson's sturdy vigor felt in every word, and for the expert precision with which the author appraises and demonstrates the significance of each detail or anecdote.

## VI

The formal writings of Johnson, whatever their dignity and excellence, lack the peculiar charm of his conversation; not so his letters and meditations. A century which excelled in biography naturally excelled in letter-writing. The letters of Swift, Pope, Gray, Cowper, and above all, Walpole, have become classics of epistolary art. Few would think of Johnson in this connection. To be sure, his letters are not, in the same sense as the others, 'literary'; they are written unconsciously, spontaneously, with little or no thought of

publication; his correspondent is not the public. But herein lies their very excellence. Walpole may be read for his wit, his delicacy, his studied informality, his sophisticated and supercilious glance at a passing world. He writes the letter; Johnson writes letters, and writes them artlessly. Or if ever he employs art, his art is governed by his thought of the particular man or woman whom he addresses at the time, and as we read them we still feel like intruders for whose ears they were never intended.

The two determinants in Johnson's letters were his feeling for his correspondent, and his sense of the occasion for his writing. They, therefore, follow no fixed model or style, but vary widely through the entire range of his nature and activities. They are trifling, tender, newsy, gratulatory, or beseeching, as the case may be. They comfort the wretched, and raise up the fallen. Each letter is perfectly adapted to the recipient, whether the writer drops into small talk with Mrs. Thrale, or pets her wee daughter; whether he teaches the dignity of merit to the haughty Lord Chesterfield, or gently brings to his right mind the whimpering Boswell; whether, single-handed, he defies a combination of powerful booksellers, or pours out his soul to his dying mother.

In the solitary agony of his prayers and meditations we may contemplate him only in humble silence.

## VII

Of the critical essays appended to most of the *Lives of the Poets* Boswell remarks that they contain such standards of criticism as, 'if digested and arranged in one system by some modern Aristotle or Longinus, might form a code on that subject such as no other nation can show.' Boswell's *forte* was not literary criticism; no man need imagine himself a modern Aristotle or Longinus before daring to undertake a synthesis of John-



son's standards of judgment in literature. It is a common but unfair opinion that he had no standards of criticism, only prejudices, or at most certain narrow and hidebound opinions. He is usually considered the vociferous spokesman of conservative Eighteenth Century preferences in literature; but a review of his scattered utterances on the subject shows that his standards were consistent, and generally reasonable, if not all-inclusive.

Special aversions in literature he had, as any man of acute perception and mental vigor must have. One of these was literary imitations—imitations of Pindar, of classical mythology, or mythology and folk-lore of any sort, imitations of pastorals, of the ballads, of Spenser or Milton. All these imitations as he saw them were imitations of externalities, not a perpetuation or revival of the deeper qualities of the originals. To him therefore they were affected and insincere. Of the real Homer, or the real Pindar, or Theocritus, or Spenser, or Milton, he thought as a sane man thinks. But affectation, whether in a small or a great poet, he would not tolerate. Affectation and true feeling do not go together, and the presence of the one argues a proportionate absence of the other. On these grounds he rejects the conceits of the 'metaphysical' school, and this is the basis of his much deplored condemnation of *Lycidas*. Johnson suspects Milton of caring more for the pastoral style of verse than for the death of Edward King.

Johnson is sometimes described as an absolute monarch in literature, whose edicts were authorized by the sacred constitution of Horace's *Art of Poetry* and Pope's *Essay on Criticism*. Yet his *Essays* and *Lives* reiterate again and again his suspicion of the petty prescriptionist who measures every work by a neat outfit of rules, but whose mind is too small to comprehend in any degree the nature of genius.

He approached his task of criticism with certain principles, most of them the well-tried standards of Aristotle and Horace. These, however, he held subject to revision or suspension. 'There is always an appeal open from criticism to nature,' he says;<sup>1</sup> and again: 'There always lies an appeal from domestic criticism to higher judicature; and the public, which is never corrupted, nor often deceived, is to pass the last sentence upon literary claims.'<sup>2</sup> This confidence in the composite judgment of men never declined nor failed him. Mere fashion he condemned, as he deprecated the blind worship of Shakespeare and the popular rage for the odes of Gray. With his unerring accuracy in such matters he detects in both a lack of sincerity. On the other hand, that which had really touched the hearts of many is sure of his regard and reverence, whether it is to his liking or not. Of the famous *Elegy* he says: 'I rejoice to concur with the common reader; for by the common sense of readers uncorrupted with literary prejudices, after all the refinements of subtilty and the dogmatism of learning, must be finally decided all claim to poetical honors.'<sup>3</sup>

Sincerity and catholicity of appeal, then, were two of Johnson's standards in criticism. A third was clearness and accuracy of thought. He would not tolerate ideas that were fuddled or lost in mere riot of fantasy; and for this he arraigns and condemns the odes of Gray. In no other respect is Johnson's method of criticism so wholesome to the modern reader. We are generally satisfied to get from poetry only an emotional reaction, good or bad, and to judge poetry according to the force of this reaction, without further inquiry. Johnson is fully aware of the importance of emotional power, but never excuses poetry from the necessity of intellectual strength, and his expert analysis of a single

<sup>1</sup> *Preface to Shakespeare.*

<sup>2</sup> *Rambler* 23.

<sup>3</sup> *Life of Gray*, last paragraph.

poem in search of its flaws in thought suggests to the modern study of poetry the discipline of which it is most in need.

For a critic who preferred Fleet Street to Greenwich Park, and breasted 'the full tide of human existence at Charing Cross,' the one supreme function of poetry was naturally to reveal human life in all its phases, joyous or tragic.<sup>1</sup> To accomplish this effectually, poetry assumes a pleasing and winsome form by careful selection of those things which it shall portray ('images,' as Johnson calls them), and by the energy and charm of its language and measure. Genius is measured by originality, that is, the power of discovering something new, or at least, some new way in which to reveal the old. Learning is a necessary part of a poet's equipment, but wide intercourse with human life is more urgently necessary, and beyond this that peculiar energy and freshness of expression which marks what we call genius.

There is little or no mysticism in Johnson's idea of poetic inspiration—no talk of Platonic ideas or divine enthusiasm, of visitations from above, of coals from off the altar. In his religion Johnson was deeply mystical; and he would not admit that religion was a subject proper to poetry. For the stories of sacred history 'the nakedness and simplicity' of the Biblical narrative suffice; 'all addition,' he says, 'to that which is already sufficient for the purposes of religion seems not only useless, but, in some degree, profane.'<sup>2</sup> As for religious lyrics, 'Contemplative piety . . . cannot be poetical. Man, admitted to implore the mercy of his Creator, and plead the merits of his Redeemer, is already in a higher state than poetry can confer.'<sup>3</sup>

Of his own personal predilections in poetry no one

<sup>1</sup> His fullest statement of this principle is found in *Rasselas*, chapter 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Lives* 1. 291, 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1. 49.

was more conscious than himself. 'It would be ludicrous to boast of impartiality,' he says in one place,<sup>1</sup> and in another suspects himself of 'some partial fondness for the memory of Dryden.'<sup>2</sup> But he distinguished between partial fondness and impartial judgment. He had, indeed, a partial fondness for the cadence and regular period of the rimed couplet, and preferred it to the unbroken surge of blank verse. From this it is too hastily inferred that he condemned blank verse, whereas in reality he considered rimed couplet the lower form of the two. The couplet has more grace, smoothness, and finish; thought conveyed in parcels so neat and small is easily grasped and retained. Since rime is more pleasing, it should be employed to adorn and recommend a slight and otherwise tediously sententious subject. But for sublime and highly impassioned discourse blank verse is the right dress. Sublime and impassioned conceptions should be clothed in blank verse, which, however, hangs and trails ludicrously when it cloaks the little conceptions of a little poet. 'He that thinks himself capable of astonishing may write blank verse; but those that hope only to please must condescend to rime.'<sup>3</sup> He, therefore, condemns the use of blank verse in Phillips' *Cider*, and says: 'Contending angels may shake the regions of heaven in blank verse; but the flow of equal measures and the embellishment of rime must recommend to our attention the art of grafting.'<sup>4</sup> In Young's *Night Thoughts* 'the wild diffusion of the sentiments and the digressive sallies of the imagination would have been compressed and restrained by confinement to rime.'<sup>5</sup> The course of Thomson's *Seasons* would have been 'obstructed and embarrassed by the frequent intersection of the sense, which are the necessary effects of rime.'<sup>6</sup> Johnson's conception of blank

<sup>1</sup> *Preface to Shakespeare*.

<sup>2</sup> *Lives* 1. 194 (*Milton*).

<sup>3</sup> *Lives* 3. 395 (*Young*).

<sup>4</sup> *Lives* 3. 273 (*Pope*).

<sup>5</sup> *Lives* 1. 319 (*J. Phillips*).

<sup>6</sup> *Lives* 3. 299 (*Thomson*).

verse was much influenced by listening almost daily to the cadence of Vergil, Horace, and Juvenal, in a language both highly inflected and admitting the greatest variety of word-order. The contrast of English with Latin in this respect may have determined his opinion that English is not flexible enough to admit in blank verse the proper variety of cadence and distinctness of measure.<sup>1</sup> But jealous as he was of the integrity of the English vocabulary and idiom, possibly he has here failed to perceive what has historically proved to be the very spirit of English metre—free and wide variation from the metrical norm, and the refusal to submit too monotonously to a strict metrical scheme. After all, the strictness of the rimed couplet, splendid as it was in a master's hand, is un-English, and not likely ever again to assert unlawful domination in English poetry.

## VIII

In the study of style there is always the danger of exaggerating its importance. Manner is never so significant as matter; technique should always rank below content; and excessive preoccupation with the study or cultivation of style is an infallible sign of its deterioration. The style of Johnson is certain to be misunderstood, if it is considered apart from the ideals and nature of the man himself, of whom it is a distinct shadow. When Macaulay cursed it with the name 'Johnsonese,' he was thinking of a caricature of Johnson's style that was common enough among his imitators, and sometimes the aberration of Johnson himself. This affected and spurious elegance bore merely the external and easily imitable traits of Johnson's manner, but even in the hands of Gibbon and Miss Burney it is only the cold, un-

*Lives* 1. 192 (*Milton*); 3. 231 (*Pope*).

crumbled cinder of the original. With his usual scorn for imitation Johnson said: 'The imitators of my style have not hit it.'<sup>1</sup>

Externally considered, Johnson's manner of expression is stiff, chiefly owing to his habits of sentence-structure. A list of these peculiarities will suffice.' His sentences are nearly always declarative, and the normal order of statement is seldom altered. Entire sentences from capital to period are not as a rule periodic; but his sentences are often compound, and the single member or clause is generally cast into periodic form. The subordinate clauses are also unvaried and narrow in range, and are kept strictly subordinate in sense, as well as in structure; his commonest subordinate form is the relative clause restrictive. Subordination within subordination he avoids. Parenthetical and impromptu phrases or particles, and even the auxiliary *do*, never rise to interrupt or block the momentum of his discourse. His most obvious habit is that of balance; his sentences, clauses, and even phrases, occur constantly in twos and fours, and such even apportionment of parts appears in almost every line; when he enumerates examples or actions, however, they usually appear in threes. From this it will be seen that his style is well-knit and highly articulate. On the whole the noun predominates over the other parts of speech in his writing; the adjective is not frequent enough to enfeeble it, nor the verb unduly to mobilize it. This prevalence of the noun greatly adds to the mass and weight of his style—a style which has its nearest analogy in the massive architecture which he admired.

The balanced symmetry of Johnson's constructions, though sometimes overdone and inappropriate, is best understood when considered in terms of architecture.

<sup>1</sup> *Life* 3. 172.

<sup>2</sup> Illustrations of these structural traits may be found on any page of his serious writings.

It is like an arch, best calculated to bear the weight of meaning and the strain of passion. When the meaning is slight, and emotion is absent, the balance becomes absurdly disproportioned; but where his words carry meaning and emotion enough to crush into confused ruin the syntax of an ordinary man, his balance upholds the weight, and gives it both calculated force and direction.

In these latter days of literary informality Johnson's preference for words of Latin origin is not much liked. It has been often assumed that he made easy things hard in his fondness for polysyllabic grandeur, but the test of actual and intelligent reading will show how sincere was his hatred of 'that offense which is always given by unusual words.'<sup>1</sup> If the reader sometimes comes upon things 'equiponderant' or 'colorific,' or hears of 'the tortuosities of imaginary rectitude,' yet he has no doubt at all of Johnson's meaning. Like many great literary men he was a conservative in language, and strongly averse to coinage or importation; he chooses no words which are not in good English standing. In his hands Latinized English becomes more than mere dead, unwieldy bulk. A writer with feebler heart and mind could not bring it to life, but Johnson's mental energy once applied makes his sonorous polysyllables fairly vibrate with energy and strike at his meaning with unerring precision.

This Latin element lent weight, sonority, and cadence to Johnson's style, but his chief reason for employing it seems to have lain deeper than this. It is necessary to observe that it is not constant. In the lighter essays, and in narrative and merely descriptive parts of the *Lives of the Poets*, it subsides; but in the moralistic or sententious writings it strongly predominates.<sup>2</sup> When

<sup>1</sup> *Rambler*, No. 86.

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the raciest English he ever wrote is found in his tract, *The False Alarm*.

Johnson refused to write Goldsmith's epitaph in English, he had reasons; a learned man's epitaph, he insisted, 'should be in ancient and permanent language' to insure 'classical stability.' Everything intended to be universal and permanent should be in Latin. His best written utterance was moralistic; it expressed deductions which he had drawn from hard, varied, and well-endured experience, and had found confirmed by the learning of the ages. These, therefore, had claim to universality and permanence, and should receive such induration as English Latinity could give them.

But his appreciation of Latin did not unfit Johnson to realize the power of the native element in the language, and, if he uses it sparingly, he nevertheless uses it with well-calculated effect. His undulating periods are sometimes interrupted by a blunt English aphorism; and, in his longer sentences, the native monosyllables, penetrating the mass of his eloquence, serve to quicken and inspirit it. The following passage is a fair example of his practice:

'The first years of man must make provision for the last. He that never thinks never can be wise. Perpetual levity must end in ignorance; and intemperance, though it may fire the spirits for an hour, will make life short or miserable. Let us consider that youth is of no long duration, and that in maturer age, when the enchantments of fancy shall cease, and phantoms of delight dance no more about us, we shall have no comforts but the esteem of wise men, and the means of doing good. Let us, therefore, stop, while to stop is in our power; let us live as men who are sometime to grow old, and to whom it will be the most dreadful of all evils to count their past years by follies, and to be reminded of their former luxuriance of health only by the maladies which riot has produced.'<sup>1</sup>

Johnson's style at its best is not flexible; it is not

<sup>1</sup> *Rasselas*, chapter 17.



easily adapted to various occasions. As Carlyle says, it is a 'good buckram style,' stout and durable, not flowing in natural and easy folds about any form that it may invest. The talk of his ladies—Tranquilla, Nekaya, Misella, Zosima—is like their names. They are Johnsons ill-disguised in petticoats. Sometimes, however, he throws off his formality, and impersonates with great verve and spirit a light character, or indulges in a learned *jeu d'esprit*. But diverting as these may be, he never seems to have regarded them as a significant part of his literary achievement.

As for the deeper, inimitable, and therefore really great qualities of Johnson's style, three predominate. The first is its strength. To touch the merest sentence of Johnson's in passing is like brushing a strong man in a crowd. It is never flabby or inert, but stout, heavy, and unyielding. It finds its way to the listener's mind by displacement, not by insinuation.

Secondly, Johnson's style is spontaneous. He had taken much pains before it became so. He told Sir Joshua that 'he had early laid it down as a fixed rule to do his best on every occasion, and in every company; to impart whatever he knew in the most forcible language he could put it in; and that by constant practice, and never suffering any careless expressions to escape him, or attempting to deliver his thoughts without arranging them in the clearest manner, it became habitual to him.'<sup>1</sup> His writings went wet to the press without blot or revision. The only exception to this is the essays, which, before being reprinted in permanent form, underwent a process of excision and condensation which left them in a state more characteristic of Johnson's style than that of the first draft. It is not surprising that we come upon an occasional infelicity, that we hear of 'forces resistless as the blasts of pestilence,' or of beings 'chained down by pain,' of 'the common

<sup>1</sup> *Life* 1. 204.

commerce of civility,' or of one who 'exalts his faults.' But far better these than a sacrifice of his directness and spontaneity.

He shuns affectation, and displays no gratuitous ornament or purple patches. Such is his independence that he rarely is reminiscent in phrase of even the Bible, or Shakespeare, or Milton. To others he reiterated the advice of Horace and Pope to retouch and slowly elaborate their work. The instinct of his own art gave him other counsel, forced upon him the hard work of elaboration at the beginning of his career, and then freed his spirit from the trammels of conscious and embarrassed self-adjustment to speak what he felt.

The strength and spontaneity of Johnson's writing rise from a deeper source—its passion. Out of his struggles, his defeats, his sorrows, his contrition, his hatred of sophistry and sham, his tender concern for all human misery—out of these came the emotion that permeates his style and raises it to its greatest height.

To appreciate this, as all other traits of his style, one must hear his language; it demands oral interpretation, because, like all good style, it was orally conceived, and, except through the ear, its power and beauty cannot be revealed. As an example take the following passage from the *Falkland's Islands*:

'The life of a modern soldier is ill represented by heroic fiction. War has means of destruction more formidable than the cannon and the sword. Of the thousands and the ten thousands that perished in our late contests with France and Spain, a very small part ever felt the stroke of an enemy; the rest languished in tents and ships, amidst damps and putrefaction; pale, torpid, spiritless, and helpless; gasping and groaning, unpitied among men, made obdurate by long continuance of hopeless misery; and were at last whelmed in pits, or heaved into the ocean, without notice and without

remembrance. By incommodious encampments and unwholesome stations, where courage is useless, and enterprise impracticable, fleets are silently dispeopled, and armies sluggishly melted away.'

The movement of this passage is even, but irresistible; its waves rise and sink naturally; its cadence is neither abrupt nor delayed, but deep as that of the ocean. It refreshes and stimulates the listener's mind with its vigor, but creates no nervous excitement. By its emotional power it may both stir and regulate the feelings of him who reads into full and true response to its own.

## IX

It is a favorite principle with Johnson that literary genius must provide itself with twofold equipment—a knowledge of men, and a knowledge of books. Neither shall greatly avail without the other. A right understanding of life cannot be got by observing the present world, without reading of the past; nor by reading of the past without observing the present. Knowledge of each must correct, confirm, enforce, and vitalize knowledge of the other. Not only the man of genius, but the scholar as well, must command this twofold knowledge, since scholarship in its humbler way has the same function as genius—to interpret the significance of life itself.

The extent and variety of Johnson's learning are astonishing. Adam Smith said 'Johnson knew more books than any man alive.'<sup>1</sup> His memory seldom failed him. He used to say that he knew almost as much at eighteen as at fifty-four,<sup>2</sup> and no doubt the period of his greatest accumulations was past by the time he left Oxford. He probably knew best the Latin poets. Juvenal he seems to have had almost entirely by heart, but he quotes the others freely, and with such appropriateness and feeling as clear his citations of all

<sup>1</sup> *Life* 1. 71.

<sup>2</sup> *Life* 1. 445.

pedantry. The enthusiasm of his Latin learning was very high; that of his Greek learning low in comparison. In his time the idea of Greek culture was much distorted and darkened by the interposed glass of Latinism; and yet it is not likely that, had Johnson been allowed to see Hellenism face to face, it would have stirred him with such enthusiasm as it aroused in Winckelmann or Shelley. But Johnson's Greek learning was in certain directions exceptional. Homer, Hesiod, and Euripides seem to have been best known to him. 'What he read *solidly* at Oxford was Greek,' says Boswell,<sup>1</sup> and the younger Burney, a Hellenist of high repute, says that Johnson 'could give a Greek word for almost every English one!'<sup>2</sup>

With all his scholarly accumulations, Johnson was not in our modern sense a specialist. To be sure, he compiled almost unaided a dictionary which marks the greatest single advance ever made in English lexicography, but for etymologies and everything else connected with the history of the language he was dependent upon others. His peculiar contribution was the enlargement of the scope of such a work, and the employment in it of fine literary sense and experience. He edited Shakespeare, but more by the aid of literary insight and exalted common sense, than by mere expert knowledge of details. He wrote literary history with brilliant erudition, and this subject, if any, was his specialty, but not in the sense of having devoted his entire life to it and to nothing else.

But Johnson did not despise minute specialization where it is governed by intelligent purpose. For example, the generally uninteresting and minute task of textual criticism demands in his opinion the highest abilities and training, and in his *Preface to Shakespeare* he nobly rebukes Pope for his 'contempt "of the dull duty of an editor."' 'He understood but half his under-

<sup>1</sup> *Life* 1. 70.

<sup>2</sup> *Life* 4. 385.

taking,' continues Johnson. 'The duty of the collator is indeed dull, yet, like other tedious tasks, is very necessary; but an emendatory critic would ill discharge his duty, without qualities very different from dullness. In perusing a corrupted piece he must have before him all possibilities of meaning, with all possibilities of expression. Such must be his comprehension of thought, and such his copiousness of language. Out of the many readings possible, he must be able to select that which best suits with the state, opinions, and modes of language prevailing in every age, and with the author's particular caste of thought, and turn of expression. Such must be the knowledge, and such his taste. Conjectural criticism demands more than humanity possesses, and he that exercises it with most praise, has very frequent need of indulgence. Let us now be told no more of the dull duty of an editor.' Such words have not lost their significance in a day when men either scornfully abjure specialism, or stifle it with narrow conception and practice.

Johnson's learning is but one gauge of his scholarship. The spirit in which he used it is more important. His essays were written chiefly 'to inculcate wisdom and piety,'<sup>1</sup> and his *Lives of the Poets* 'in such a manner as may tend to the promotion of piety,'<sup>2</sup> not by mere platitude, but by discerning and showing true values in life. To this he devoted his stores accumulated from the observation and experience of other men in other times. Any half dozen of his moral essays will furnish a widely varied list of cited authors, which is the more impressive for Johnson's method of impromptu composition. Yet he employs his learning not to astonish the reader, but to illuminate his meaning. His learning was indeed encyclopedic, but its wide circle was invariably true to its centre in Johnson's passionate desire to live sincerely, bravely, and rever-

<sup>1</sup> *Rambler* 208.

<sup>2</sup> *Life* 4. 34.

ently, and to teach others the art of living in like manner.

The spirit of his scholarship is nowhere more clearly reflected than in a remark of Imlac: 'To talk in public, to think in solitude, to read and to hear, to inquire and to answer inquiries, is the business of a scholar. He wanders about the world without pomp or terror, and is neither known nor valued but by men like himself.'<sup>1</sup> Johnson here shows both the courage and the quiet unemulous dignity that accompanies all true scholarship. But not in statement of his theory does it appear so illustrious as in his practice; witness the seven long years of solitary labor at the *Dictionary*, in which he continually overdrew upon his strength and learning.

The vanity of scholarship was unknown to Johnson. He was never self-satisfied in his learning. He ever yearned for more, not with ambition or with 'the scholar's melancholy which is emulation,' but with the true scholarly passion of curiosity. He says: 'Curiosity is, in great and generous minds, the first passion and the last; and perhaps always predominates in proportion to the strength of the contemplative faculties.'<sup>2</sup> It was curiosity that stimulated his imagination to outstrip his actual knowledge, and saved him at once from the pride and the foolishness of a pedant. It energized all his inquiries; it sent him on all his travels, whether among the stormy Hebrides, or, in imagination, to the court of Sweden or the wall of China. It sought interviews with traders, artisans, soldiers, philosophers, and peers; it drew him into public controversies; it set him dabbling in physie and amateur chemistry to the imminent risk of life and limb. On arriving for dinner at Mr. Cambridge's, 'he ran eagerly to one side of the room, intent on poring over the backs of the books.' 'It seems odd,' said Mr. Cambridge, 'that one should have

<sup>1</sup> *Rasselas*, chapter 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Rambler*, No. 150.

such a desire to look at the backs of books.' 'Sir, the reason is very plain. Knowledge is of two kinds. We know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information upon it.'<sup>1</sup> Where he could not himself explore a subject, he encouraged and inspired others to do so; imbued though he was with the spirit of Roman antiquity, he scorned not the old Teutonic and Celtic civilizations, but was all the more eager that their secrets should be explored and published. Thomas Astle, the English antiquarian, 'who lives,' says Walpole, 'like moths on old parchments,' was not despised by Johnson, who could always learn something from him of 'the antiquities of my country.' In one letter to Astle he writes: 'Many things familiar to you are unknown to me, and most others. . . . Had the Saxons any gold coin? I have much curiosity after the manners and transactions of the middle ages, but have wanted either diligence, or opportunity, or both. You, Sir, have great opportunities, and I wish you both diligence and success.' Nearly twenty-five years earlier he had written to the Irish antiquary, O'Connor: 'I have long wished that the Irish literature were cultivated. Ireland is known by tradition to have been once the seat of piety and learning; and surely it would be very acceptable to all those who are curious either in the original of nations, or the affinities of languages, to be further informed of the revolution of a people so ancient, and once so illustrious.'<sup>2</sup> He further expresses the fear that to neglect longer the study of Welsh and Irish antiquity may in another century mean the complete extinction of such learning beyond all possibilities of revival. Twenty years later, in 1777, he writes again to O'Connor: 'I expected great discoveries in Irish antiquity, and large publications in the Irish language; but the world still remains as it was, doubtful and ignorant. What the Irish language is in itself, and to

<sup>1</sup> *Life* 2. 365.

<sup>2</sup> *Life* 1. 322.

what languages it has affinity, are very interesting questions, which every man wishes to see resolved that has any philological or historical accuracy.' Especially is he interested in a history of Christian Ireland before English interference. 'Set about it, therefore, if you can: do what you can easily do without anxious exactness. Lay the foundation, and leave the superstructure to posterity.'<sup>1</sup> Fired as he was by passionate curiosity, Johnson both accomplished more, and inspired more, in the world of learning than ever he could have done by highly specialized activity. It was his task to stimulate the inquiry of others, and to support them in their labors by sympathetic interest, and by the manly nobility which he always maintained for scholarship as well as for literature.

## X

Very likely there never was a time when delight in the beauties of nature was so common and manifest as it is at present. Hence to many Johnson's alleged inability to appreciate such beauty appears to be his most glaring defect. On this point he should speak for himself.

In his brief *Diary of a Journey in Wales* he writes: 'The way lay through pleasant lanes, and overlooked a region beautifully diversified with trees and grass.'<sup>2</sup> In one of his letters he says: 'I hope to see standing corn in some part of the earth this summer, but I shall hardly smell hay or suck clover flowers.'<sup>3</sup> His love of vegetation and trees appears frequently in his writings, and often furnishes him with a figure or illustration.

But the austere grandeur of the Hebrides struck a

<sup>1</sup> *Life* 3. 112. Johnson's gratification, could he have foreseen the advance in Celtic studies, can easily be imagined.

<sup>2</sup> *Life* 5. 439.

<sup>3</sup> *Lett.* 2. 163.



more responsive chord in his nature. Of a spot near Glénmorison he wrote to Mrs. Thrale: 'I sat down to take notes on a green bank, with a small stream running at my feet, in the midst of savage solitude, with mountains before me and on either hand, covered with heath.'<sup>1</sup> Again he writes of sailing by night along the coast of Mull: 'The wind rose, the sea swelled; and Boswell desired to be set on dry ground; we, however, pursued our navigation, and passed by several little islands in the silent solemnity of faint moonshine, seeing little, and hearing only the wind and water.'<sup>2</sup> Of a night journey near Inverary he says: 'The night came on while we had yet a great part of the way to go, though not so dark but that we could discern the cataracts which poured down the hills on one side, and fell into one general channel that ran with great violence on the other. The wind was loud, the rain was heavy, and the whistling of the blast, the fall of the shower, the rush of the cataracts, and the roar of the torrent, made a nobler chorus of the rough music of nature than it had ever been my chance to hear before.'<sup>3</sup> He speaks also of a scene on Lochness which, Boswell says, 'for a time engrossed all our attention.' 'The way,' says Johnson, 'was very pleasant; the rock out of which the road was cut was covered with birch-trees, fern, and heath. The lake below was beating its bank by a gentle wind, and the rocks beyond the water on the right stood sometimes horrid and wild, and sometimes opened into a kind of bay, in which there was a spot of cultivated ground yellow with corn. In one part of the way we had trees on both sides for perhaps half a mile. Such a length of shade perhaps Scotland cannot show in any other place.'<sup>4</sup> At Auchinleck 'he was pleased,' says Boswell, 'when I showed

<sup>1</sup> Lett. 1. 247, 8.

<sup>2</sup> Lett. 1. 282.

<sup>3</sup> *Journey to the Western Islands*, near end.

<sup>4</sup> Lett. 1. 241, 242.

him some venerable old trees, under the shade of which my ancestors had walked. He exhorted me to plant assiduously.' The generally treeless condition of Scotland was a subject of his constant raillery while he traveled there; a rage for planting arose soon after, which was ascribed by Sir Walter Scott to Johnson's sarcasms, and by reason of it he was nicknamed 'Papa-dendrion.'

But Johnson never grows ecstatic over the beauties of nature. His enjoyment of them was always subordinate to a grander contemplation of human life, as in all the greatest poets, philosophers, and artists. If the beauties of nature are seldom described by him, or not subtly observed, nevertheless he is safe from the exaggeration of feeling toward them so common in later or less normal minds. He is not guilty of the shallow sentimentalism toward nature that was coming into vogue in his own time; nor of the despondency that goes naturally with excessive delight in her sensuous beauties, nor of the vague and flimsy pantheism that results from incompetent endeavors to spiritualize her; nor of idle and transient impressionism, sufficient unto the moment, but incapable of consummation. A feeling for nature Johnson confessed, nor did he despise it in himself nor in others. But he would say, let it not exist for its own sake; let it not be cultivated as a mere fashion, and run the risk of insincerity; let it, like all other human interests, serve the prime interest of living wisely and bravely.

Johnson readily confessed his inability to appreciate the arts. When, just before his death, he heard the music of a passing funeral, he acknowledged that it was the first time he had ever been affected by music. Boswell says he was fond of the bagpipe, and would stand for some time with his ear close to the great drone—certainly not strong proof of his discernment in the art. He regretfully admits that he cared as little

for painting. The difficulty of the performance was his chief criterion.\* Yet he really felt the superiority of Raphael on viewing his works in Paris. He was disgusted, as well he might be, with contemporary allegorical painting, and appreciated the sincerity and enthusiasm of the portraits of his time. 'I should be grieved,' he says,<sup>1</sup> 'to see Reynolds transfer to heroes and to goddesses, to empty splendor, and to airy fiction, that art which is now employed in diffusing friendship, in reviving tenderness, in quickening the affections of the absent, and continuing the presence of the dead.'

Boswell explains his friend's defects of appreciation by his defects of ear and eye. This perhaps accounts in part for his indifference to the stage. A reason more commonly, but less fairly, alleged is his jealousy of Garrick. But there is more philosophy in his criticisms than this implies. He had no patience with professional rant, of which even Garrick sometimes was guilty, and more than once he corrected defects of accent and emphasis in the great actor's delivery. By testimony of his friends Johnson himself was doubtless the better declaimer. With regard to the art of acting he seems to have felt its inferiority as being an interpretative, not a creative art; it involved, he feared, a sacrifice of the real personality and character of the actor to the various personalities and characters which it was his business from time to time to represent, thus causing a dangerous instability in the actor himself. At any rate, variety and instability are the faults for which he criticizes his old pupil, while he generously admits that he would himself have fallen more deeply into them, had he met with Garrick's success. He appreciated the acting of comedy more than of tragedy. 'Familiar comedy,' he wrote, 'is often more powerful on the theatre than in the page; imperial tragedy is always less.'<sup>2</sup> Per-

<sup>1</sup> *Idler*, No. 45.

<sup>2</sup> *Preface to Shakespeare*.

haps the explanation lies in his extraordinary sensitiveness to the great tragic facts of life. Doubtless as he read the lines of *Macbeth* or *Lear* his imagination outstripped any histrionic attempt to convey the tragic meaning of these plays, and even Garrick's powerful reinforcement of their emotion, imperfectly seen or heard by him, was not equal to the force of his own realization.

To the influence of architecture he was more susceptible. He seemed indifferent to the debased styles of his time, and his expressed appreciation referred to examples of late Romanesque or early Gothic ecclesiastical building. This is well shown in the journal of his tour in France. From St. Denis he writes: 'The church is not very large, but the middle aisle is very lofty and awful.' Again from Noyon: 'The cathedral is very beautiful.' Of the twelfth-century church at Cambrai, destroyed in the Revolution, he says: 'It is very beautiful, with chapels on each side. The choir splendid. . . . The neff very high and grand.' He called York Minster 'an edifice of loftiness and elegance equal to the highest hopes of architecture,' thus discerning with some accuracy the aims of the architects who planned this rather ornate example of Gothic. He said of Durham: 'The cathedral has a massiveness and solidity such as I have seen in no other place: it rather awes than pleases, as it strikes with a kind of gigantic dignity, and aspires to no other praise than that of rocky solidity and indeterminate duration.' At Auchinleck he admired 'the sullen dignity of the old castle.' But very likely his feelings were as much stirred by the historic associations of these buildings, as by their architectural merit. 'If I were to visit Italy,' he said, 'my curiosity would be more attracted by convents than by palaces.'<sup>1</sup> When, after long and toilsome journeying, he at last set foot on the island of Iona, he viewed its

<sup>1</sup> *Life* 1. 365.

ruins with no little emotion. 'That man is little to be envied,' he wrote afterwards, 'whose patriotism would not gain force upon the plain of Marathon, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of Iona.'

## XI

On a fine spring day in Johnson's sixty-sixth year, he and Boswell set out in a carriage for Twickenham. 'Johnson was in such good spirits,' says Boswell, 'that everything seemed to please him as we drove along.' The subject of good humor was broached. 'Shaking his head, and stretching himself at ease in the coach, and smiling with much complacency, he turned to me and said, "I look upon myself as a good-humored fellow." . . . I answered, also smiling, "No, no, Sir, that will not do. You are good-natured, but not good-humored; you are irascible. You have not patience with folly and absurdity."'<sup>1</sup> In *The Rambler*<sup>2</sup> Johnson defines good-humor, as 'a habit of being pleased,' and after urgently recommending it for three pages, he comes slyly upon the following anti-climax: 'Surely nothing can more evidently show the value of this quality, than that it recommends those who are destitute of all other excellencies, and procures regard to the trifling, friendship to the worthless, and affection to the dull.' Perpetual good humor, then, argues contemptible weakness of character, and is an impossible trait in an idealist and a foe to compromise. Johnson's ill humor comes of his jealousy for his ideals, where it is not a matter of ill health, or of the vile melancholy 'which has made me mad all my life, at least not sober.' It is an evidence of strength in his character; or, if ever a sign of weakness, then a weakness against which he struggled. 'When I am musing alone,' he wrote to his friend Taylor, 'I feel a pang for every moment

<sup>1</sup> *Life* 2. 362.<sup>2</sup> No. 72.

that any human being has by my peevishness or obstinacy spent in uneasiness;'<sup>1</sup> and twenty years later he said in Miss Burney's hearing: 'I am always sorry when I make bitter speeches, and I never do it but when I am insufferably vexed.' In such cases he was, by common testimony, the first to seek reconciliation with his victim. But asperity was the exception, not the rule, with him, and Boswell deplores 'the unjust opinion of the harshness of his general demeanor.'

It is significant that his gentleness was more often remarked by women than by men. Johnson went into society more than one would infer from Boswell's account. On such occasions the ladies either overlooked or forgot his uncouthness. They seem never to have been repelled, for to the end of his life they continued to gather about him, and hang over him with an almost sentimental devotion. If the four women who knew Johnson best had been gifted with Boswell's skill and industry, they could have produced as good a portrait as his, though in a wholly different light and attitude. Johnson was sought out by the gorgeous little group of the Blue Stockings. Lady Lavinia Spencer, whose portrait by Sir Joshua is one of his loveliest, recalled hearing her mother say now and then: 'Nobody dines with us to-day; therefore, child, we will go and get Dr. Johnson.' And they would drive off to Bolt Court to fetch him.<sup>2</sup> Wraxall, whose account of Johnson betrays the lingering tenderness of some old bruise, says nevertheless: 'I have seen the Duchess of Devonshire, then in the first bloom of youth, hanging on the sentences that fell from Johnson's lips, and contending for the nearest place to his chair.'<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Johnson's devotion to her husband, and Mrs. Thrale's friendship hardly need be cited.

<sup>1</sup> *Letters* 1. 72.

<sup>2</sup> S. Rogers, *Table Talk*, p. 10, cited by Hill, *Life* 3. 425, n. 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Historical and Posthumous Memoirs* 1. 113, 114.

The story of Miss Burney's affection and memory for him runs through her long memoirs of herself and of her father, from her first girlish enthusiasm to that dark day, many years after, when she, among the few that were left of his old friends, haunted the stairs of his lodging, and yearned to catch one more look or word from the dying man. Another of his admirers was the Quakeress Olivia Lloyd, for whom he conceived a boyish enthusiasm at sixteen; such too were Molly Aston, Mrs. Emmet, an actress at Lichfield, and Mrs. Careless, 'the first woman with whom I was in love,' who at Birmingham many years later, 'took me under her care and told me when I had tea enough.' Nor should the Miss Cottrells be forgotten, at whose house he first met Reynolds; nor the clever Miss Carter, 'who could make a pudding as well as translate Epictetus,' and who 'ought to be celebrated in as many different languages as Lewis le Grand'; nor his harmless flirtation with Mrs. M'Kinnon in the Hebrides, and with the little lady in the Isle of Skye, who vainly tried to embarrass him by sitting on his knee. One of Boswell's triumphs is his picture of Johnson at Inverary, honored by the famous beauty, Miss Gunning, then Duchess of Argyle, while her daughter, Lady Betty Hamilton, 'after dinner, went and placed her chair close to his, and leaned upon the back of it, and listened eagerly. . . . I never saw him so gentle and complaisant as this day.'<sup>1</sup> His address to Mrs. Boswell was so courteous as to 'charm her into a forgetfulness' of his exterior. To be sure he drained the candles on her carpet, and she thought he had too much influence over her husband—jealousy which, Boswell says, is 'natural to a female mind.'<sup>2</sup> Her ill will grieved Johnson for three years, but his knightly patience with the lady triumphed at last, and she sent him her forgiveness in a jar of marmalade, so gallantly acknowledged in his

<sup>1</sup> *Life* 5. 358.

<sup>2</sup> *Life* 2. 269, n.

famous letter to her.<sup>1</sup> His truer and higher chivalry appears in his affectionate ministrations to the medley of wretched men and women who found asylum in his household, and in return made it a den of discord. To Mrs. Thrale's remonstrance on such a state of voluntary misery he would only reply that she knew not 'how to make allowances for situations which she had never experienced.'<sup>2</sup>

## XII

At a dinner given by Mr. Dilly in 1778, Johnson and his friends were talking quietly about benevolence, when Johnson remarked suddenly: 'I am willing to love all mankind but an American'; and 'his inflammable corruption,' says Boswell, 'bursting into horrid fire, he breathed out threatenings and slaughter, calling them "Rascals, Robbers, Pirates"; and exclaiming that he would "burn and destroy them."' Miss Seward, looking at him in mild but steady astonishment, said "Sir, this is an instance that we are always most violent against those whom we have injured." He was irritated still more by this delicate and keen reproach, and roared out with another tremendous volley, which one might fancy could be heard across the Atlantic.'<sup>3</sup> His irascibility on this occasion, though partly due to some untoward circumstance of health or situation, shows that a sensitive spot had been touched, and that it lay very near certain of his deepest convictions. It is easy to call these convictions prejudice, where we do not agree with them. But Johnson's dislike of America was only a corollary of his convictions on larger subjects, in which he was invariably consistent.

Johnson was deeply humanitarian. Even in the days of his extreme poverty quiet acts of charity were a

<sup>1</sup> See p. 379.

<sup>2</sup> *Misc.* 1. 292.

<sup>3</sup> *Life* 3. 290.



commonplace in his life. He called for a reform of the very severe penal code. He protested against imprisonment for debt. He did his utmost to save from the gallows a foolish clergyman condemned to death for forgery. The outcasts of London could always count upon his kindness, and the instance is well-known of his care for an abject and exhausted woman whom he raised from the kennel, and carried to his own shelter. His pity was deeper and more sincere than the fashionable 'benevolence' of his time. It is natural, then, that he should hate slavery, and should be deeply shocked by the stories of oppression in the West Indies. It is natural that he should hate war, especially wars of aggression and conquest. 'How is it,' he cried; 'how is it that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty among the drivers of negroes?''<sup>1</sup> and 'in company with some very grave men at Oxford, he gave as his toast, "Here's to the next insurrection of the negroes in the West Indies."''<sup>2</sup> As early as 1740 he maintained 'the natural right of negroes to liberty and independence.' 'An individual may, indeed, forfeit his liberty by a crime; but he cannot by that crime forfeit the liberty of his children.'<sup>3</sup> But not merely as holders of slaves had Americans forfeited a right to demand liberty. He suspected them but too justly of unfair treatment of the Indians. 'I do not much wish well to discoveries, for I am always afraid they will end in conquest and robbery.'<sup>4</sup> In the French and Indian war he said: 'Such is the contest that no honest man can heartily wish success to either party. . . . It is only the quarrel of two robbers for the spoil of a passenger.'<sup>5</sup> In 1769 he said of the Americans: 'Sir, they are a race of convicts, and ought to be thankful for any thing we allow them short of hanging.'<sup>6</sup> And in

<sup>1</sup> *Taxation no Tyranny*, near end.

<sup>2</sup> *Life* 3. 202.

<sup>3</sup> *State of Affairs in 1756*.

<sup>4</sup> *Life* 3. 200.

<sup>5</sup> *Lett.* 1. 210.

<sup>6</sup> *Life* 2. 312.

1775 he wrote: 'On the original contrivers of the mischief [American insubordination] let an insulted nation pour out its vengeance.'<sup>1</sup> Johnson's attitude towards America, then, was in part humanitarian, and took its origin in reports of wars and colonial maladministration.

But his position was not merely a matter of feeling; it was quite as much determined by principle. Politically he was an idealist and a Tory. His Toryism, if somewhat colored by sentiment, was chiefly his faith in his theory of society.

Whiggism after 1760 appears different from the Whiggism of the time of Queen Anne. Though Whig principles were unchanged, the bearing of Whiggism was altered. In the earlier days the party had included Addison and the oncoming Robert Walpole; it was then energetic, practical, unsentimental, sedate. In the later days it tended to sentimentalize, to theorize, to talk of liberty and oppression, of freedom and equality, and 'my country.' The better Whigs were free from such extravagance, but the noisy and conspicuous Whigs became more numerous, until Whiggism became ill-defined and unsafe. A Whig might stand anywhere between a loyal supporter of the Constitution such as Burke, and a shallow doctrinaire who in one breath proclaimed himself a patriot, and clamored for the razing of the social fabric to one level. Such was the lady to whom Johnson showed 'the absurdity of the leveling doctrine' by asking that her footman sit at the table with them. 'She has never liked me since. Sir, your levelers wish to level down as far as themselves; but they cannot bear leveling up to themselves.'<sup>2</sup> The cant of Whiggism, like all cant, was sure to disgust Johnson. 'When a butcher tells you his heart bleeds for his country, he has in fact no uneasy feeling.'<sup>3</sup> But he saw also that the tendency to level society is a tendency

<sup>1</sup> *Taxation no Tyranny.*

<sup>2</sup> *Life* 1. 447.

<sup>3</sup> *Life* 1. 394.

away from a peculiar requisite of civilization which measures its distance from barbarism. 'Were mankind to be in this pretty state of equality, they would soon degenerate into brutes.' 'Whiggism is a negation of all principle.' 'The first Whig was the Devil.' The logical outcome for him of Whig notions urged to their utmost would be loss of standards of citizenship, loss of reverence, of obedience, of order, of that which holds society together. 'Whigs,' he writes, 'are not willing to be governed. . . . Let not our boldest oppugners of authority look forward with delight to the futurity of Whiggism.'<sup>1</sup> The oppression so much feared by the Whigs Johnson considered imaginary—the speculation of uneasy alarmists. Said Sir Adam Fergusson to him: 'Sir, in the British constitution it is surely of importance to keep up a spirit in the people, so as to preserve a balance against the crown.' 'Sir,' answers Johnson in a fury, 'I perceive that you are a vile Whig. Why all this childish jealousy of the power of the crown? The crown has not power enough. When I say that all governments are alike, I consider that in no government power can be abused long. Mankind will not bear it. If a sovereign oppresses his people to a great degree, they will rise and cut off his head. There is a remedy in human nature against tyranny, that will keep us safe under every form of government.'<sup>2</sup>

In his famous tract on the American question, *Taxation no Tyranny*, his reasoning rests upon just this basis—the necessity to highly civilized society of subordination and elaborate gradation, and the sacrifice of civilization that must come at the reducing of such gradation to too low a level. Of course this is reasoning theoretically, idealistically, with a sublime disregard of the particular case in hand, and of the character of those

<sup>1</sup> Canceled conclusion of *Taxation no Tyranny*; see *Life* 2. 814.

<sup>2</sup> *Life* 2. 170.

who really led the struggle for American independence. In direct contrast is Burke, who abjured theory, and insisted upon a practical reckoning with the actual condition, temper, and mood of the Americans at the time. To us Burke's method seems to make Johnson's ridiculous. But Johnson's opposition to Whiggism had its justification sooner than any one expected. If we think that Burke, the statesman immersed in affairs, was therefore more trustworthy than the philosopher Johnson, let us recall Burke's sudden and horrified revulsion at the overturning of order and government in France, when with all his strength he threw himself against the current of Whiggism that swirled about him, and threatened to sweep English civilization into anarchy and confusion. It was Burke, if it was any one man, who saved England then, but to do so he was thrust into the position of his revered friend, whom death had spared the anxiety of that moment of danger. Burke was overtaken almost unprepared, whereas Johnson's voice had been raised in reiterated warning against this gloomy consequence.

Sentiment mingled with Johnson's Tory principles, but there is danger of taking this sentiment more seriously than did Johnson himself. Boswell's father, the Laird of Auchinleck, was only one of many who thought him a 'Jacobite fellow,' but this suspicion of his Jacobitism seems merely to have amused Johnson. He always had a high regard for rank, and what Burke calls the solemn plausibilities of the world, but it was a regard rather for the position as a necessary part of the English social structure, than for the person who occupied it. If bad material gets into that structure, it is no final proof that the design itself is bad. Take it out when opportunity comes of doing so without injuring the fabric, and put in better. Perhaps Johnson sometimes imagined the English constitutional design built up of better material than in reality it con-

tained. 'I have the old feudal notions,' he said.<sup>1</sup> He loved Oxford, and the medieval church, and old castles, and every suggestion of an ancient society with its rich inheritance of all that pertains to the art of living.

With all his conservatism and conformity Johnson was a radical of radicals, and a democrat of democrats. He showed exquisite sense of propriety in an unexpected interview with the king, and by his conduct gave an unconscious illustration of Chesterfield's expert advice for such an occasion.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand he sacrificed neither dignity nor individuality when he talked with the thieves and prostitutes of London. He knocked down an impudent bookseller, and 'beat many a fellow.' He 'lived in the world, and took, in some degree, the color of the world as it moved along.' His remark to Sir Adam Fergusson, just quoted, shows his sympathy with a people's just resistance to real tyranny. 'If the abuse be enormous,' said he, 'Nature will rise up, and claiming her original rights, overturn a corrupt political system.'<sup>3</sup>

Johnson was that peculiar servant of democratic society called a man of letters, panurgic and indefatigable. His final criterion of literary values was the judgment of the people. His works—whether Parliamentary Debates, Dictionary, Essays, tracts or biography—had as their peculiar function the increase of popular intelligence in literature, politics, and morality. 'No man who ever lived by literature has lived more independently than I have done,' said he, referring to the period of his life before he received his pension; and the story of his championship for the independence of all literary men has its culmination in the famous letter to Chester-

<sup>1</sup> *Life* 3. 177.

<sup>2</sup> 'Were you to converse with a King, you ought to be as easy and unembarrassed as with your own *valet de chambre*: but yet every look, word, and action, should imply the utmost respect' (Chesterfield, *Letters to his Son* 3. 203; cf. *Life* 2. 40).

<sup>3</sup> *Life* 1. 424.

field. It signifies, for better or worse, the end of patronage, and of the servile prostitution of literature to the corrupt taste of a spurious elite.

A true aristocrat is sometimes defined as one who in his conversation can set people of any rank at ease, without sacrifice of his own nature or bearing. Is this not as good a definition of the true democrat? At any rate it is a satisfactory definition of a gentleman, and, beneath all his whims and temperamental disfigurements, such a gentleman was Johnson.

### XIII

The subject which Johnson liked best at the University was metaphysics. Many years later, as he was walking with Boswell, they touched upon the subject of Berkeley's idealism. Boswell remarked that it could not be refuted. 'I refute it thus,' said Johnson, kicking a large stone so hard that he rebounded from it.<sup>1</sup> At another time he called Berkeleyanism a 'reverie.' His mind was not naturally speculative. If he was at one time fascinated with metaphysics, it was through his habit of losing himself for hours in idle dreams and abstractions, from which he awoke to punish himself with merciless flagellations of conscience. Such preoccupation he never took for real philosophic thought, and deplored the many days of his life which it had subtracted from the earnest business of living.

His philosophical attitude was but a shadow of his attitude in religion. If he rejected Berkeley, it does not follow that he was a materialist, as is sometimes alleged. Berkeley's system was so purely ideal that it stood next door to skepticism, and led logically and immediately to the philosophical distrust of Hume.<sup>2</sup> Metaphysical doubt and religious doubt united in Hume, and Johnson looked upon the two as concomi-

<sup>1</sup> *Life* 1. 471.

<sup>2</sup> Leslie Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century* 1. 42, 3.

tant. At least they would become such in his own case, if he were to admit either to a place in his mind. He therefore leaned away from the spiritual temptations which metaphysics held out to him, and especially abjured Berkeleyanism from an instinct of the dangers to his faith which it would involve.

*Rasselas*, more clearly than any other of Johnson's writings, illustrates his consistent attitude towards theories of living and of moral philosophy, particularly such as he felt were gaining too much vogue at his own time. The doctrines of optimism, primitive simplicity, the life according to nature, are summoned and dismissed as mere theories, untested and unrelated to the stern reality of life in the world. The whole review is occasionally precipitated into a brief and solemn sentence so charged with sanity and wisdom that it cannot be forgotten. 'When scruples importune you, which you in your lucid moments know to be vain, do not stand to parley, but fly to business.' 'Do not suffer life to stagnate; it will grow muddy for want of motion; commit yourself again to the current of the world.' 'It seems to me that while you are making the choice of life, you neglect to live.'

#### XIV

With all his sense of the realities of life, Johnson was in some respects a mystic. He never for a moment was unconscious of the mysteries that surround the earthly life. They haunted him. Contemplation of birth, death, immortality, stirred him with unutterable emotion. Even in so slight a trait as his fondness for the old romances his love of mystery appears, and the inference that he was superstitious and believed in ghosts is but a coarse and clumsy interpretation of his mysticism. His eagerness to test alleged cases of second sight, and his part in the notorious Cock Lane affair, show a kind of skepticism in such matters that was a sufficient

safeguard from vagaries of superstition. He was 'glad to have every evidence of the spiritual world';<sup>1</sup> and of its manifestation he said: 'All argument is against it; but all belief is for it.' Out of his agony at the death of his wife he prays that she may be allowed to have some care of him: 'Grant that I may enjoy the good effects of her attention and ministration, whether exercised by appearance, impulses, dreams, or in any other manner agreeable to thy Government.' But in this there is neither the fear nor the selfishness which are the marks of superstition. Such faith was a part of Johnson's religion.

In his religious faith appears the noblest side of Johnson's nature. All that he says or does refers itself ultimately to that. His reverence, his loyalty, and his affection are its three determining traits. It was unwavering, mystic, not shrunken with any astringent tenet or personal interpretation.

Boswell, with no intention of reproach, called him a dignified Methodist, and there was gossip to the effect that he died a member of that sect. This signifies nothing more than the breadth of his religion. Sectarianism was to him neither lovely nor desirable. With all his conservative fidelity to the Church of England, he seems to have felt the real significance of Methodism, and of its rise during his time. In the English Church there was too much conventionality, too secure intellectualism. To Johnson the democrat it was clearly guilty of neglecting its humbler children. He therefore sympathized with Methodism in its popular ministrations. He appreciated its appeal to the emotions which the preaching of the English Church, so little touched with them itself, had come to neglect in its hearers.

On the other hand Johnson felt the absence of intellectual substructure in Methodism. Methodists at Oxford are like the cow—'a very good animal in the

<sup>1</sup> *Life* 4. 298.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 3. 235.

<sup>3</sup> *Misc.* 1. 11.



field: but we turn her out of a garden.'<sup>1</sup> But in his own life he represents the reconciliation of both elements in faith—intellect and emotion. He is superior to the mere rationalist of his or any other time in the profound feeling of his religion; but his religious emotion is supported by the constancy and clearness of his faith.

He could not have lived when he did and escape the temptations of religious doubt; at every turn there is evidence that his battle with unbelief was fierce and incessant, and that it was carried on, not only on his own behalf, but with a sense of championship for his own generation and for generations to come. At his death Sir Joshua Reynolds, a good man, but not an 'enthusiast,' said of Johnson that, 'so far from denying Christ, he had been, in his age, his greatest champion.'

The intensity of his feeling, and the emphasis of his words at every recurrence of the subject, indicate its supreme importance for him.

His terror at the thought or suggestion of death in any form is but the manifestation of his doubt. This fear seems to have turned partly upon his dread of final judgment and his distrust of his own merits. But he was also haunted continually by his uncertainty of the conditions that lie beyond this life. It is not surprising, then, that at the moments when he is most intensely concerned with the unalterable fact of death, his religious faith emerges in its purest and most beautiful form. We shall look for it most profitably in the letters to his dying mother, in his account of his farewell to her old servant, Catherine Chambers; but chiefly it shines forth in those last moments of his, when he advanced toward his mortal change with the same courage that had made his hard life heroic, and with a new peace that marked his final triumph over the enemies of his noble spirit.

<sup>1</sup> *Life* 2. 187.

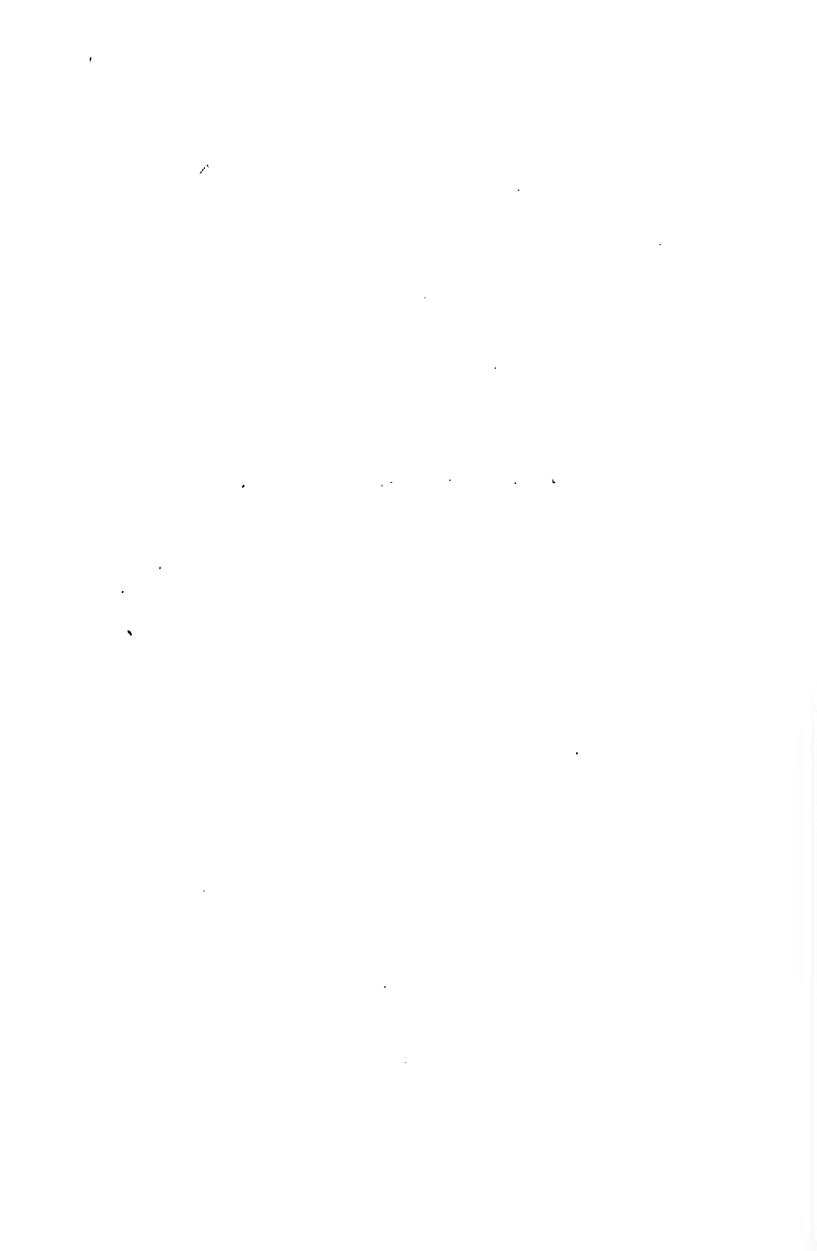
<sup>2</sup> Leslie and Taylor, *Life of Reynolds* 2. 459.

## CHRONOLOGICAL OUTLINE OF JOHNSON'S LIFE

1709. Born at Lichfield, September 18.  
1728-9. Pembroke College, Oxford. Conversion.  
1729-35. No settled employment; teaches at Bosworth and Edial.  
1735. Marries Mrs. Porter.  
  
1737. Visits London with Garrick; settles there.  
1738. Begins contributing to Cave's *Gentleman's Magazine*. London.  
1740-43. Reports Parliamentary debates for Cave.  
1744. *Life of Savage*.  
1747. *Prologue on the Opening of Drury Lane Theatre*; Plan for a *Dictionary of the English Language*.  
1747-55. Writes the *Dictionary*.  
1748. *Vanity of Human Wishes*; Irene acted.  
  
1750-52. *Rambler*.  
1752. Death of his wife. Meets Reynolds.  
1753. *Adventurer*.  
1754. First visit to Oxford since his student days.  
1755. Letter to Chesterfield; *Dictionary* published. Meets Langton.  
1756-7. Writes for *Literary Magazine*; begins edition of *Shakespeare*.  
1758-60. *Idler*.  
1758. Gets to know Burney.  
1759. Death of his mother; *Rasselas*. First meets Goldsmith. Robert Burns born.  
  
1762. Receives pension.  
1763. First meets Boswell.  
1764. Literary Club founded.

- 1764 or 1765. First knows the Thrales.  
1765. *Shakespeare* published.  
1767. Interview with George III.  
1770. *False Alarm* published. Wordsworth born.  
1771. *Falkland's Islands*. Walter Scott born.  
1773. Travels in Scotland and the Hebrides.  
1774. *Journey to the Western Islands; The Patriot*.  
Death of Goldsmith.  
1775. *Taxation no Tyranny*. Made LL.D. at Oxford.  
Travels in France.  
1777-81. *Lives of the Poets*.  
1779. Death of Garrick.  
1781. Death of Thrale.  
1782. Death of Levett.  
1783. Suffers a stroke of paralysis.  
1784. Long illness and partial recovery. Mrs. Thrale  
marries Piozzi. Death, December 13.

**SELECTIONS FROM JOHNSON**



## PREFATORY NOTE ON *LONDON*

Johnson's *London* was written in 1738, before he was twenty-nine. He had first come to town the preceding year, and meanwhile had nearly starved as an obscure hack-writer in the service of Cave and his *Gentleman's Magazine*. *London* helped him to emerge from this obscurity.

Johnson wrote it rapidly, and offered it to Cave as the work of a man whose name he would not give. 'I cannot help taking notice,' he wrote, 'that besides what the author may hope for on account of his abilities, he has likewise another claim to your regard, as he lies at present under very disadvantageous circumstances of fortune.' The poem was finally sold with all rights for ten guineas—neither a high nor a low price for the times.

It was published anonymously on the same day as Pope's 1738, and promptly made a sensation in the literary world of London. It reached a second edition within a week. Pope said of the unknown poet: 'He will soon be *deterré*.' He learned Johnson's name, and took part in an unsuccessful attempt to get him the degree of Master of Arts from Dublin.

As an imitation of Juvenal it follows the details of the original more closely than *The Vanity of Human Wishes*; many a line is a bit of brilliant translation. But too close an imitation has led the poet sometimes to describe a state of things more true of Rome than of London.

The poem is rather a brilliant academic performance than a serious satire, yet it expresses with much vigor, Johnson's hatred of insincerity and servile meanness, and his sense of public danger which lies in forgetting the simplicity and ideals of an earlier period in England. On the other hand, some of the sentiments seem quite un-Johnsonian. He suspects the government, and fears tyr-

anny; he talks in the 'patriotic' strain which he afterwards condemned; he commends the 'pleasing banks,' and 'peaceful vales' of the country as better than the dark and swarming life of the city; and 'Hibernia's land' and 'the rocks of Scotland,' which he scorned in later life, he now prefers to the Strand. He even glorifies poverty, which he came to regard as an unqualified evil.

But these sentiments are not central in the poem, nor inconsistent with later opinion. They are due chiefly to his imitation of Juvenal, and partly to his great hardships at the time. After all his muse does not 'snarl,' but appears in a mood of lively abandon.

## London : a Poem

IN IMITATION OF THE THIRD SATIRE  
OF JUVENAL

—Quis iniquæ

Tam patiens urbis, tam ferreus ut teneat se?—JUV. 1. 30, 1.

THOUGH grief and fondness in my breast rebel,  
When injur'd THALES bids the town farewell,  
Yet still my calmer thoughts his choice commend,  
(I praise the hermit, but regret the friend)  
Resolv'd at length, from vice and London far, 5  
To breathe in distant fields a purer air,  
And, fix'd on Cambria's solitary shore,  
Give to St. David one true Briton more.

For who would leave, unbrib'd, Hibernia's land,  
Or change the rocks of Scotland for the Strand? 10  
There none are swept by sudden fate away,  
But all whom hunger spares with age decay:  
Here malice, rapine, accident, conspire,  
And now a rabble rages, now a fire;  
Their ambush here relentless ruffians lay, 15  
And here the fell attorney prowls for prey;  
Here falling houses thunder on your head,  
And here a female atheist talks you dead.

While Thales waits the wherry that contains  
Of dissipated wealth the small remains, 20  
On Thames's banks in silent thought we stood,  
Where Greenwich smiles upon the silver flood;  
Struck with the seat that gave Eliza birth,  
We kneel, and kiss the consecrated earth;  
In pleasing dreams the blissful age renew, 25  
And call Britannia's glories back to view;



Behold her cross triumphant on the main,  
 The guard of Commerce and the dread of Spain,  
 Ere masquerades debauch'd, excise oppress'd,  
 Or English honor grew a standing jest. 30

A transient calm the happy scenes bestow,  
 And for a moment lull the sense of woe.  
 At length awaking, with contemptuous frown  
 Indignant Thales eyes the neighb'ring town.

Since worth, he cries, in these degen'rate days 35  
 Wants ev'n the cheap reward of empty praise;  
 In those curs'd walls, devote to vice and gain,  
 Since unrewarded science toils in vain;

Since hope but soothes to double my distress,  
 And ev'ry moment leaves my little less; 40  
 While yet my steady steps no staff sustains,  
 And life still vig'rous revels in my veins,  
 Grant me, kind heaven, to find some happier place,  
 Where honesty and sense are no disgrace;

Some pleasing bank where verdant osiers play, 45  
 Some peaceful vale with nature's paintings gay,  
 Where once the harass'd Briton found repose,  
 And safe in poverty defy'd his foes;  
 Some secret cell, ye Pow'rs, indulgent give.

Let — live here, for — has learn'd to live. 50  
 Here let those reign, whom pensions can incite  
 To vote a patriot black, a courtier white;  
 Explain their country's dear-bought rights away,  
 And plead for pirates in the face of day;  
 With slavish tenets taint our poison'd youth, 55  
 And lend a lie the confidence of truth.

Let such raise palaces, and manors buy,  
 Collect a tax, or farm a lottery;  
 With warbling eunuchs fill a licens'd stage.  
 And lull to servitude a thoughtless age. 60

Heroes, proceed! what bounds your pride shall hold?  
 What check restrain your thirst of pow'r and gold?  
 Behold rebellious virtue quite o'erthrown,  
 Behold our fame, our wealth, our lives your own.

To such the plunder of a land is giv'n, 65  
 When public crimes inflame the wrath of Heav'n;  
 But what, my friend, what hope remains for me,

Who start at theft, and blush at perjury?  
 Who scarce forbear, though Britain's court he sing,  
 To pluck a titled poet's borrow'd wing; 70  
 A statesman's logic unconvinc'd can hear,  
 And dare to slumber o'er the Gazetteer;  
 Despise a fool in half his pension dress'd,  
 And strive in vain to laugh at Clodio's jest.

Others with softer smiles, and subtler art, 75  
 Can sap the principles, or taint the heart;  
 With more address a lover's note convey,  
 Or bribe a virgin's innocence away.  
 Well may they rise, while I, whose rustic tongue  
 Ne'er knew to puzzle right, or varnish wrong, 80  
 Spurn'd as a beggar, dreaded as a spy,  
 Live unregarded, unlamented die.

For what but social guilt the friend endears?  
 Who shares Qrgilio's crimes, his fortune shares.  
 But thou, should tempting villainy present 85  
 All Marlborough hoarded, or all Villiers spent,  
 Turn from the glitt'ring bribe thy scornful eye,  
 Nor sell for gold, what gold could never buy,  
 The peaceful slumber, self-approving day,  
 Unsullied fame, and conscience ever gay. 90

The cheated nation's happy fav'rites, see!  
 Mark whom the great caress, who frown on me!  
 LONDON! the needy villain's gen'ral home,  
 The common sewer of Paris and of Rome;  
 With eager thirst, by folly or by fate, 95  
 Sucks in the dregs of each corrupted state.  
 Forgive my transports on a theme like this,  
 I cannot bear a French metropolis.

Illustrious EDWARD! from the realms of day,  
 The land of heroes and of saints survey; 100  
 Nor hope the British lineaments to trace,  
 The rustic grandeur, or the surly grace;  
 But, lost in thoughtless ease and empty show,  
 Behold the warrior dwindled to a beau;  
 Sense, freedom, piety, refin'd away, 105  
 Of France, the mimic, and of Spain the prey.

All that at home no more can beg or steal,  
 Or like a gibbet better than a wheel;

- Hiss'd from the stage, or hooted from the court,  
 Their air, their dress, their politics, import; 110  
 Obsequious, artful, voluble, and gay,  
 On Britain's fond credulity they prey.  
 No gainful trade their industry can 'scape,  
 They sing, they dance, clean shoes, or cure a clap:  
 All sciences a fasting Monsieur knows, 115  
 And, bid him go to hell, to hell he goes.  
 Ah! what avails it, that, from slav'ry far,  
 I drew the breath of life in English air;  
 Was early taught a Briton's right to prize,  
 And lisp the tale of HENRY's victories; 120  
 If the gull'd conqueror receives the chain,  
 And flattery prevails when arms are vain?  
 Studious to please, and ready to submit,  
 The supple Gaul was born a parasite:  
 Still to his int'rest true, where'er he goes, 125  
 Wit, brav'ry, worth, his lavish tongue bestows;  
 In ev'ry face a thousand graces shine,  
 From ev'ry tongue flows harmony divine.  
 These arts in vain our rugged natives try,  
 Strain out with falt'ring diffidence a lie, 130  
 And gain a kick for awkward flattery.  
 Besides, with justice, this discerning age  
 Admires their wond'rous talents for the stage:  
 Well may they venture on the mimic's art,  
 Who play from morn to night a borrow'd part; 135  
 Practis'd their master's notions to embrace,  
 Repeat his maxims, and reflect his face;  
 With ev'ry wild absurdity comply,  
 And view each object with another's eye;  
 To shake with laughter ere the jest they hear, 140  
 To pour at will the counterfeited tear;  
 And, as their patron hints the cold or heat,  
 To shake in dog-days, in December sweat.  
 How, when competitors like these contend,  
 Can surly virtue hope to fix a friend? 145  
 Slaves that with serious impudence beguile,  
 And lie without a blush, without a smile;  
 Exalt each trifle, ev'ry vice adore,  
 Your taste in snuff, your judgment in a whore;

Can Balbo's eloquence applaud, and swear 150  
He gropes his breeches with a Monarch's air.

For arts like these preferr'd, admir'd, caress'd,  
They first invade your table, then your breast;  
Explore your secrets with insidious art,  
Watch the weak hour, and ransack all the heart; 155  
Then soon your ill-placed confidence repay,  
Commence your lords, and govern or betray.

By numbers here from shame or censure free,  
All crimes are safe but hated poverty.  
This, only this, the rigid law pursues, 160  
This, only this, provokes the snarling Muse.

The sober trader at a tatter'd cloak  
Wakes from his dream, and labors for a joke;  
With brisker air the silken courtiers gaze,  
And turn the varied taunt a thousand ways. 165  
Of all the griefs that harass the distress'd,  
Sure the most bitter is a scornful jest;  
Fate never wounds more deep the gen'rous heart,  
Than when a blockhead's insult points the dart.

Has Heaven reserv'd, in pity to the poor, 170  
No pathless waste, or undiscover'd shore?

No secret island in the boundless main?  
No peaceful desert yet unclaim'd by Spain?  
Quick let us rise, the happy seats explore,  
And bear Oppression's insolence no more. 175

This mournful truth is ev'rywhere confess'd,  
SLOW RISES WORTH, BY POVERTY DEPRESS'D:  
But here more slow, where all are slaves to gold,  
Where looks are merchandise, and smiles are sold:  
Where won by bribes, by flatteries implor'd, 180  
The groom retails the favors of his lord.

But hark! th' affrighted crowd's tumultuous cries  
Roll through the streets, and thunder to the skies:  
Rais'd from some pleasing dream of wealth and pow'r,  
Some pompous palace, or some blissful bow'r, 185  
Aghast you start, and scarce with aching sight  
Sustain th' approaching fire's tremendous light;  
Swift from pursuing horrors take your way,  
And leave your little ALL to flames a prey;  
Then through the world a wretched vagrant roam, 190

- For where can starving merit find a home?  
 In vain your mournful narrative disclose,  
 While all neglect, and most insult your woes.  
 Should Heav'n's just bolts Orgilio's wealth confound,  
 And spread his flaming palace on the ground, 195  
 Swift o'er the land the dismal rumor flies,  
 And public mournings pacify the skies;  
 The laureat tribe in venal verse relate,  
 How virtue wars with persecuting fate;  
 With well-feign'd gratitude the pension'd band 200  
 Refund the plunder of the beggar'd land.  
 See! while he builds, the gaudy vassals come,  
 And crowd with sudden wealth the rising dome;  
 The price of boroughs and of souls restore,  
 And raise his treasures higher than before: 205  
 Now bless'd with all the baubles of the great,  
 The polish'd marble and the shining plate,  
 Orgilio sees the golden pile aspire,  
 And hopes from angry Heav'n another fire.  
 Could'st thou resign the park and play content, 210  
 For the fair banks of Severn or of Trent;  
 There might'st thou find some elegant retreat,  
 Some hireling senator's deserted seat;  
 And stretch thy prospects o'er the smiling land,  
 For less than rent the dungeons of the Strand; 215  
 There prune thy walks, support thy drooping flowers,  
 Direct thy rivulets, and twine thy bowers;  
 And, while thy grounds a cheap repast afford,  
 Despise the dainties of a venal lord:  
 There ev'ry bush with Nature's music rings, 220  
 There ev'ry breeze bears health upon its wings;  
 On all thy hours security shall smile,  
 And bless thine evening walk and morning toil.  
 Prepare for death if here at night you roam,  
 And sign your will before you sup from home. 225  
 Some fiery fop, with new commission vain,  
 Who sleeps on brambles till he kills his man;  
 Some frolic drunkard, reeling from a feast,  
 Provokes a broil, and stabs you for a jest.  
 Yet ev'n these heroes, mischievously gay, 230  
 Lords of the street, and terrors of the way;

Flush'd as they are with folly, youth, and wine,  
Their prudent insults to the poor confine;  
Afar they mark the flambeau's bright approach,  
And shun the shining train, and golden coach. 235

In vain, these dangers past, your doors you close,  
And hope the balmy blessings of repose;  
Cruel with guilt, and daring with despair,  
The midnight murd'rer bursts the faithless bar;  
Invades the sacred hour of silent rest, 240  
And leaves, unseen, a dagger in your breast.

Scarce can our fields, such crowds at Tyburn die,  
With hemp the gallows and the fleet supply.  
Propose your schemes, ye senatorian band,  
Whose ways and means support the sinking land: 245  
Lest ropes be wanting in the tempting spring,  
To rig another convoy for the king.

A single gaol, in ALFRED's golden reign,  
Could half the nation's criminals contain;  
Fair justice, then, without constraint ador'd, 250  
Held high the steady scale, but sheath'd the sword;  
No spies were paid, no special juries known,  
Blest age! but, ah, how diff'rent from our own!

Much could I add, but see the boat at hand,  
The tide retiring calls me from the land: 255  
Farewell!—When youth, and health, and fortune spent  
Thou fly'st for refuge to the Wilds of Kent;  
And, tir'd like me with follies and with crimes,  
In angry numbers warn'st succeeding times;  
Then shall thy friend, nor thou refuse his aid, 260  
Still foe to vice, forsake his Cambrian shade;  
In virtue's cause once more exert his rage,  
Thy satire point, and animate thy page.

## PERFATORY-NOTE ON VANITY OF HUMAN WISHES

*The Vanity of Human Wishes* was written and published when Johnson was thirty-nine. In the ten years since *London* he had continued writing for the *Gentleman's Magazine*, but his contributions diminished in number as his independent writings increased. Among these is the *Life of Savage*, one of his most brilliant performances. He had also finished his unsuccessful tragedy *Irene*, had begun the *Dictionary*, had written up two volumes of *Parliamentary Debates* from the notes of hired listeners, and had struck off a great number of reviews, translations, brief biographies, and ephemeral essays.

By this time he acquired some reputation. His tragedy was soon presented by Garrick, and the publication of *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, a month before the performance, helped to win for it the fairly respectful hearing which the London public granted it.

The poem was written at Hampstead, a place now consecrated by many literary associations. Johnson told Steevens: 'I wrote the first seventy lines in the course of one morning. . . . The whole was composed before I threw a single couplet on paper' (*Johnsonian Miscellanies* 2. 313), and he afterwards recalled writing a hundred lines of it in one day. He sold the poem for fifteen guineas.

Garrick used to say: 'When Johnson lived with the Herveys, and saw a good deal of what was passing in life, he wrote his *London*, which is lively and easy. When he became more retired he gave us his *Vanity of Human Wishes*, which is as hard as Greek. Had he gone on to imitate another satire, it would have been as hard as Hebrew.' Nevertheless he had expected to imitate other satires of Juvenal, for he 'had them all in his head.'

At a glance *The Vanity of Human Wishes* is seen to possess more weight and solemn dignity than *London*. It

is a more serious performance. It contains more of Johnson himself, and less of Juvenal. To be sure he has followed the order of topics in his original—desire of power, of eloquence, of military glory, of long life, of beauty—but these are not the main topics of his criticism. The poem is deeply tinged with his constitutional melancholy, brooding upon the vicissitude of things and the futility of endeavor. It deplores blind and passionate devotion to the achievement of any one aim. It denounces such evils of his time as corruption in public and private life, pretense, sycophancy, hardness of heart, prostitution of literature to mere gain, and the neglect of merit; against such abuses he contended for the rest of his life.



## The Vanity of Human Wishes

IN IMITATION OF THE TENTH SATIRE  
OF JUVENAL

LET Observation with extensive view  
Survey mankind, from China to Peru;  
Remark each anxious toil, each eager strife,  
And watch the busy scenes of crowded life;  
Then say how hope and fear, desire and hate, 5  
O'erspread with snares the clouded maze of fate,  
Where wav'ring man, betrayed by vent'rous pride  
To chase the dreary paths without a guide,  
As treach'rous phantoms in the mist delude,  
Shuns fancied ills, or chases airy good; 10  
How rarely reason guides the stubborn choice,  
Rules the bold hand, or prompts the suppliant voice,  
How Nations sink, by darling schemes oppress'd,  
When vengeance listens to the fool's request.  
Fate wings with ev'ry wish th' afflictive dart, 15  
Each gift of nature and each grace of art;  
With fatal heat impetuous courage glows,  
With fatal sweetness elocution flows,  
Impeachment stops the speaker's pow'rful breath,  
And restless fire precipitates on death. 20  
But, scarce observ'd, the knowing and the bold  
Fall in the gen'ral massacre of gold;  
Wide wasting pest! that rages unconfin'd,  
And crowds with crimes the records of mankind;  
For gold his sword the hireling ruffian draws, 25  
For gold the hireling judge distorts the laws;  
Wealth heap'd on wealth, nor truth nor safety buys,  
The dangers gather as the treasures rise.  
Let Hist'ry tell where rival kings command,  
And dubious title shakes the madd'd land, 30  
When statutes glean the refuse of the sword,  
How much more safe the vassal than the lord:  
Low skulks the hind beneath the rage of power,

And leaves the wealthy traitor in the Tower,  
Untouch'd his cottage, and his slumbers sound, 35  
Though Confiscation's vultures hover round.

The needy traveller, serene and gay,  
Walks the wild heath, and sings his toil away.  
Does envy seize thee? crush th' upbraiding joy,  
Increase his riches, and his peace destroy; 40  
Now fears in dire vicissitude invade,  
The rustling brake alarms, and quiv'ring shade,  
Nor light nor darkness bring his pain relief,  
One shows the plunder, and one hides the thief.

Yet still one gen'ral cry the skies assails, 45  
And gain and grandeur load the tainted gales:  
Few know the toiling statesman's fear or care,  
Th' insidious rival and the gaping heir.  
Once more, Democritus, arise on earth,  
With cheerful wisdom and instructive mirth, 50  
See motley life in modern trappings dress'd,  
And feed with varied fools th' eternal jest:

Thou who could'st laugh where want enchain'd caprice,  
Toil crush'd conceit, and man was of a piece;  
Where wealth unlov'd without a mourner died; 55

And scarce a sycophant was fed by pride;  
Where ne'er was known the form of mock debate,  
Or seen a new-made mayor's unwieldy state;  
Where change of fav'rites made no change of laws,  
And senates heard before they judg'd a cause; 60  
How would'st thou shake at Britain's modish tribe,  
Dart the quick taunt, and edge the piercing gibe?  
Attentive truth and nature to descry,

And pierce each scene with philosophic eye,  
To thee were solemn toys, or empty show, 65  
The robes of pleasure and the veils of woe:  
All aid the farce, and all thy mirth maintain,  
Whose joys are causeless, or whose griefs are vain.

Such was the scorn that fill'd the sage's mind,  
Renew'd at ev'ry glance on human kind; 70  
How just that scorn ere yet thy voice declare,  
Search ev'ry state, and canvass ev'ry pray'r.

Unnumber'd suppliants crowd Preferment's gate,  
Athirst for wealth, and burning to be great;

Delusive Fortune hears th' incessant call,	75
They mount, they shine, evaporate, and fall.	
On ev'ry stage the foes of peace attend,	
Hate dogs their flight, and insult mocks their end.	
Love ends with hope, the sinking statesman's door	
Pours in the morning worshipper no more;	80
For growing names the weekly scribbler lies,	
To growing wealth the dedicator flies;	
From ev'ry room descends the painted face,	
That hung the bright palladium of the place;	
And, smok'd in kitchens, or in auctions sold,	85
To better features yields the frame of gold;	
For now no more we trace in ev'ry line	
Heroic worth, benevolence divine	
The form distorted justifies the fall,	
And detestation rids th' indignant wall.	90
But will not Britain hear the last appeal,	
Sign her foes' doom, or guard her fav'rites' zeal?	
Through Freedom's sons no more remonstrance rings,	
Degrading nobles and controlling kings;	
Our supple tribes repress their patriot throats,	95
And ask no questions but the price of votes;	
With weekly libels and septennial ale,	
Their wish is full to riot and to rail.	
In full-blown dignity see WOLSEY stand,	
Law in his voice, and fortune in his hand;	100
To him the church, the realm, their pow'rs consign,	
Through him the rays of regal bounty shine,	
Turn'd by his nod the stream of honor flows,	
His smile alone security bestows:	
Still to new heights his restless wishes tow'r,	105
Claim leads to claim, and pow'r advances pow'r;	
Till conquest unresisted ceas'd to please,	
And rights submitted left him none to seize.	
At length his sov'reign frowns—the train of state	
Mark the keen glance, and watch the sign to hate.	110
Where'er he turns, he meets a stranger's eye,	
His suppliants scorn him, and his followers fly;	
Now drops at once the pride of awful state,	
The golden canopy, the glitt'ring plate,	
The regal palace, the luxurious board,	115

The liv'ried army, and the menial lord.  
 With age, with cares, with maladies oppress'd,  
 He seeks the refuge of monastic rest.  
 Grief aids disease, remember'd folly stings,  
 And his last sighs reproach the faith of kings. 120  
 Speak thou, whose thoughts at humble peace repine,  
 Shall Wolsey's wealth, with Wolsey's end, be thine?  
 Or liv'st thou now, with safer pride content,  
 The wisest justice on the banks of Trent?  
 For, why did Wolsey, near the steeps of fate, 125  
 On weak foundations raise th' enormous weight?  
 Why but to sink beneath misfortune's blow,  
 With louder ruin to the gulfs below?  
 What gave great Villiers to th' assassin's knife,  
 And fix'd disease on Harley's closing life? 130  
 What murder'd Wentworth, and what exil'd Hyde,  
 By kings protected, and to kings allied?  
 What but their wish indulg'd in courts to shine,  
 And pow'r too great to keep, or to resign?  
 When first the college rolls receive his name, 135  
 The young enthusiast quits his ease for fame;  
 Through all his veins the fever of renown  
 Burns from the strong contagion of the gown;  
 O'er Bodley's dome his future labors spread,  
 And Bacon's mansion trembles o'er his head. 140  
 Are these thy views? Proceed, illustrious youth,  
 And Virtue guard thee to the throne of Truth!  
 Yet, should thy soul indulge the gen'rous heat  
 Till captive Science yields her last retreat;  
 Should reason guide thee with her brightest ray, 145  
 And pour on misty Doubt resistless day;  
 Should no false kindness lure to loose delight,  
 Nor praise relax, nor difficulty fright;  
 Should tempting Novelty thy cell refrain,  
 And Sloth effuse her opiate fumes in vain; 150  
 Should Beauty blunt on fops her fatal dart,  
 Nor claim the triumph of a letter'd heart;  
 Should no disease thy torpid veins invade,  
 Nor Melancholy's phantoms haunt thy shade;  
 Yet hope not life from grief or danger free, 155  
 Nor think the doom of man revers'd for thee:

- Deign on the passing world to turn thine eyes,  
 And pause awhile from Letters to be wise;  
 There mark what ills the scholar's life assail,  
 Toil, envy, want, the patron, and the gaol. 160  
 See nations, slowly wise and meanly just,  
 To buried merit raise the tardy bust.  
 If dreams yet flatter, once again attend;  
 Here Lydiat's life, and Galileo's, end.
- Nor deem, when Learning her last prize bestows, 165  
 The glitt'ring eminence exempt from foes;  
 See, when the vulgar 'scape, despis'd or aw'd,  
 Rebellion's vengeful talons seize on LAUD.  
 From meaner minds, though smaller fines content;  
 The plunder'd palace, or sequester'd rent; 170  
 Mark'd out by dang'rous parts, he meets the shock,  
 And fatal Learning leads him to the block:  
 Around his tomb let Art and Genius weep,  
 But hear his death, ye blockheads, hear and sleep.
- The festal blazes, the triumphal show, 175  
 The ravish'd standard, and the captive foe,  
 The senate's thanks, the Gazette's pompous tale,  
 With force resistless o'er the brave prevail.  
 Such bribes the rapid Greek o'er Asia whirl'd,  
 For such the steady Romans shook the world; 180  
 For such in distant lands the Britons shine,  
 And stain with blood the Danube or the Rhine;  
 This pow'r has praise, that virtue scarce can warm  
 Till Fame supplies the universal charm.
- Yet Reason frowns on War's unequal game, 185  
 Where wasted nations raise a single name;  
 And mortgag'd states their grandsires' wreaths regret,  
 From age to age in everlasting debt;  
 Wreaths which at last the dear-bought right convey  
 To rust on medals, or on stones decay. 190
- On what foundation stands the warrior's pride,  
 How just his hopes, let Swedish CHARLES decide;  
 A frame of adamant, a soul of fire,  
 No dangers fright him, and no labors tire;  
 O'er love, o'er fear, extends his wide domain, 195  
 Unconquer'd lord of pleasure and of pain;  
 No joys to him pacific sceptres yield,

War sounds the trump, he rushes to the field;  
 Behold surrounding kings their pow'rs combine,  
 And one capitulate, and one resign; 200  
 Peace courts his hand, but spreads her charms in vain;  
 'Think nothing gain'd,' he cries, 'till nought remain,  
 On Moscow's walls till Gothic standards fly,  
 And all be mine beneath the polar sky.'  
 The march begins in military state, 205  
 And nations on his eye suspended wait;  
 Stern Famine guards the solitary coast,  
 And Winter barricades the realms of Frost;  
 He comes, nor want nor cold his course delay;—  
 Hide, blushing Glory, hide Pultowa's day: 210  
 The vanquish'd hero leaves his broken bands,  
 And shows his miseries in distant lands;  
 Condemn'd a needy suppliant to wait,  
 While ladies interpose, and slaves debate.  
 But did not Chance at length the error mend? 215  
 Did no subverted empire mark his end?  
 Did rival monarchs give the fatal wound?  
 Or hostile millions press him to the ground?  
 His fall was destin'd to a barren strand,  
 A petty fortress, and a dubious hand; 220  
 He left the name at which the world grew pale,  
 To point a moral, or adorn a tale.  
 All times their scenes of pompous woes afford,  
 From Persia's tyrant to Bavaria's lord.  
 In gay hostility and barb'rous pride, 225  
 With half mankind embattled at his side,  
 Great XERXES comes to seize the certain prey,  
 And starves exhausted regions in his way;  
 Attendant Flatt'ry counts his myriads o'er,  
 Till counted myriads soothe his pride no more; 230  
 Fresh praise is tried till madness fires his mind,  
 The waves he lashes, and enchains the wind;  
 New pow'rs are claimed, new pow'rs are still bestow'd,  
 Till rude resistance lops the spreading god;  
 The daring Greeks deride the martial show, 235  
 And heap their valleys with the gaudy foe;  
 Th' insulted sea with humbler thought he gains,  
 A single skiff to speed his flight remains;

- Th' incumber'd oar scarce leaves the dreaded coast  
Through purple billows and a floating host. 240
- The bold BAVARIAN, in a luckless hour,  
Tries the dread summits of a Cæsarean pow'r,  
With unexpected legions bursts away,  
And sees defenseless realms receive his sway;  
Short sway! fair Austria spreads her mournful charms, 245  
The queen, the beauty, sets the world in arms;  
From hill to hill the beacon's rousing blaze  
Spreads wide the hope of plunder and of praise;  
The fierce Croatian, and the wild Hussar,  
With all the sons of ravage crowd the war; 250  
The baffled prince, in honor's flatt'ring bloom  
Of hasty greatness, finds the fatal doom,  
His foes' derision, and his subjects' blame,  
And steals to death from anguish and from shame.
- Enlarge my life with multitude of days! 255  
In health, in sickness, thus the suppliant prays;  
Hides from himself his state, and shuns to know,  
That life protracted is protracted woe.  
Time hovers o'er, impatient to destroy,  
And shuts up all the passages of joy: 260  
In vain their gifts the bounteous seasons pour,  
The fruit autumnal, and the vernal flow'r;  
With listless eyes the dotard views the store,  
He views, and wonders that they please no more.  
Now pall the tasteless meats, and joyless wines, 265  
And Luxury with sighs her slave resigns.  
Approach, ye minstrels, try the soothing strain,  
Diffuse the tuneful lenitives of pain:  
No sounds, alas! would teach th' impervious ear,  
Though dancing mountains witness'd Orpheus near; 270  
Nor lute nor lyre his feeble pow'rs attend,  
Nor sweeter music of a virtuous friend;  
But everlasting dictates crowd his tongue,  
Perversely grave, or positively wrong.  
The still returning tale, and ling'ring jest, 275  
Perplex the fawning niece and pamper'd guest,  
While growing hopes scarce awe the gath'ring sneer,  
And scarce a legacy can bribe to hear;  
The watchful guests still hint the last offense;

The daughter's petulance, the son's expense, 280  
 Improve his heady rage with treach'rous skill,  
 And mould his passions till they make his will.

Unnumber'd maladies his joints invade,  
 Lay siege to life, and press the dire blockade;  
 But unextinguish'd Av'rice still remains, 285  
 And dreaded losses aggravate his pains;  
 He turns, with anxious heart and crippled hands,  
 His bonds of debt, and mortgages of lands;  
 Or views his coffers with suspicious eyes,  
 Unlocks his gold, and counts it till he dies. 290

But grant, the virtues of a temp'rate prime  
 Bless with an age exempt from scorn or crime;  
 An age that melts with unperceiv'd decay,  
 And glides in modest innocence away;  
 Whose peaceful day Benevolence endears, 295  
 Whose night congratulating Conscience cheers;  
 The gen'ral fav'rite as the gen'ral friend:  
 Such age there is, and who shall wish its end?

Yet ev'n on this her load Misfortune flings,  
 To press the weary minutes' flagging wings; 300  
 New sorrow rises as the day returns,  
 A sister sickens, or a daughter mourns.  
 Now kindred Merit fills the sable bier,  
 Now lacerated Friendship claims a tear;  
 Year chases year, decay pursues decay, 305  
 Still drops some joy from with'ring life away;  
 New forms arise, and diff'rent views engage,  
 Superfluous lags the vet'ran on the stage,  
 Till pitying Nature signs the last release,  
 And bids afflicted worth retire to peace. 310

But few there are whom hours like these await,  
 Who set unclouded in the gulfs of Fate.  
 From Lydia's monarch should the search descend,  
 By Solon caution'd to regard his end,  
 In life's last scene what prodigies surprise, 315  
 Fears of the brave, and follies of the wise!  
 From Marlborough's eyes the streams of dotage flow,  
 And Swift expires a driv'ler and a show.

The teeming mother anxious for her race,  
 Begs for each birth the fortune of a face; 320



Yet Vane could tell what ills from beauty spring;  
 And Sedley curs'd the form that pleas'd a king.  
 Ye nymphs of rosy lips and radiant eyes,  
 Whom Pleasure keeps too busy to be wise;  
 Whom joys with soft varieties invite, 825  
 By day the frolic, and the dance by night;  
 Who frown with vanity, who smile with art,  
 And ask the latest fashion of the heart;  
 What care, what rules, your heedless charms shall save,  
 Each nymph your rival, and each youth your slave? 330  
 Against your fame with fondness hate combines,  
 The rival batters, and the lover mines.  
 With distant voice neglected Virtue calls,  
 Less heard and less, the faint remonstrance falls;  
 Tir'd with contempt, she quits the slipp'ry reign, 835  
 And Pride and Prudence take her seat in vain.  
 In crowd at once, where none the pass defend,  
 The harmless freedom and the private friend.  
 The guardians yield, by force superior ply'd:  
 To Int'rest, Prudence; and to Flatt'ry, Pride. 340  
 Here Beauty falls betray'd, despis'd, distress'd,  
 And hissing infamy proclaims the rest.  
 Where then shall Hope and Fear their objects find?  
 Must dull suspense corrupt the stagnant mind?  
 Must helpless man, in ignorance sedate, 845  
 Roll darkling down the torrent of his fate?  
 Must no dislike alarm, no wishes rise,  
 No cries invoke the mercies of the skies?  
 Enquirer, cease; petitions yet remain  
 Which Heav'n may hear, nor deem Religion vain. 350  
 Still raise for good the supplicating voice,  
 But leave to Heav'n the measure and the choice.  
 Safe in his pow'r whose eyes discern afar  
 The secret ambush of a specious pray'r;  
 Implore his aid, in his decisions rest, 855  
 Secure, whate'er he gives, he gives the best.  
 Yet, when the sense of sacred presence fires,  
 And strong devotion to the skies aspires,  
 Pour forth thy fervors for a healthful mind,  
 Obedient passions, and a will resign'd;  
 For love, which scarce collective man can fill;

For patience, sov'reign o'er transmuted ill;  
For faith, that, panting for a happier seat,  
Counts death kind Nature's signal of retreat.  
These goods for man the laws of Heav'n ordain, 365  
These goods he grants, who grants the pow'r to gain;  
With these celestial Wisdom calms the mind,  
And makes the happiness she does not find.

## Prologue

SPOKEN BY MR. GARRICK

AT THE OPENING OF

THE THEATRE ROYAL, DRURY LANE, 1747

WHEN Learning's triumph o'er her barb'rous foes  
First rear'd the stage, immortal Shakespeare rose;  
Each change of many-color'd life he drew,  
Exhausted worlds, and then imagin'd new:  
Existence saw him spurn her bounded reign, 5  
And panting Time toil'd after him in vain.  
His pow'rful strokes presiding Truth impress'd,  
And unresisted Passion storm'd the breast.  
Then Jonson came, instructed from the school,  
To please in method, and invent by rule; 10  
His studious patience and laborious art,  
By regular approach assail'd the heart:  
Cold Approbation gave the ling'ring bays,  
For those who durst not censure scarce could praise.  
A mortal born, he met the gen'ral doom, 15  
But left, like Egypt's kings a lasting tomb.  
The wits of Charles found easier ways to fame,  
Nor wish'd for Jonson's art, or Shakespeare's flame.  
Themselves they studied, as they felt they writ;  
Intrigue was plot, obscenity was wit. 20  
Vice always found a sympathetic friend;  
They pleas'd their age, and did not aim to mend.  
Yet bards like these aspir'd to lasting praise,  
And proudly hoped to pimp in future days.  
Their cause was gen'ral, their supports were strong, 25  
Their slaves were willing, and their reign was long:  
Till Shame regain'd the post that Sense betray'd,

And Virtue call'd Oblivion to her aid.

Then, crush'd by rules, and weaken'd as refin'd,  
 For years the power of Tragedy declin'd; 30  
 From bard to bard the frigid caution crept,  
 Till Declamation roar'd whilst Passion slept;  
 Yet still did Virtue deign the stage to tread,  
 Philosophy remain'd, though Nature fled,  
 But forc'd, at length, her ancient reign to quit, 35  
 She saw great Faustus lay the ghost of Wit;  
 Exulting Folly hail'd the joyful day,  
 And Pantomime and Song confirm'd her sway.

But who the coming changes can presage,  
 And mark the future periods of the Stage? 40  
 Perhaps, if skill could distant times explore,  
 New Behns, new Durfeys, yet remain in store;  
 Perhaps where Lear has rav'd, and Hamlet died,  
 On flying cars new sorcerers may ride:  
 Perhaps (for who can guess th' effects of chance?) 45  
 Here Hunt may box, or Mahomet may dance.

Hard is his lot that here by Fortune plac'd,  
 Must watch the wild vicissitudes of taste;  
 With ev'ry meteor of caprice must play, 50  
 And chase the new-blown bubbles of the day.  
 Ah! let not Censure term our fate our choice,  
 The stage but echoes back the public voice;  
 The drama's laws, the drama's patrons give,  
 For we that live to please, must please to live.

Then prompt no more the follies you decry, 55  
 As tyrants doom their tools of guilt to die;  
 'Tis Yours, this night, to bid the reign commence  
 Of rescued Nature and reviving Sense;  
 To chase the charms of Sound, the pomp of Show,  
 For useful Mirth and salutary Woe; 60  
 Bid scenic Virtue form the rising age,  
 And Truth diffuse her radiance from the stage.

## PREFATORY NOTE ON THE *DICTIONARY*.

NONE of Johnson's works yielded him such return of fame as his *Dictionary*. He began it in 1747, the year before publishing his *Vanity of Human Wishes*, and it was published in 1755. He had expected to finish the enormous task in three years, and, after it was done, said that he had taken longer than was necessary. But it suffered many interruptions. During two of these years he wrote two essays a week of about twelve hundred words each for *The Rambler*. Following this came his distracting grief at the death of his wife; and no doubt the work suffered occasional lapses from his natural dilatoriness. As it is, one may wonder at the brief time in which the *Dictionary* was written. Johnson says that he enjoyed the work, though it was harder than writing poetry. He was accustomed to speak of it with good-natured disparagement, and defined a lexicographer as 'a harmless drudge.'

In undertaking the task he contracted with the booksellers for £1575. Out of this he was to pay six amanuenses, and provide materials and a workshop. Five of these assistants, as it happened, were Scotchmen, and most of them wretchedly poor. Johnson never failed in his kindness to these men, and in later days more than one of them was relieved by his charity. He received his money in small amounts during the progress of the work, and, on one occasion when it was not forthcoming, he threatened a strike, which brought his employers to terms. He spent the money carefully, and yet at the publication of the book the £1575 was gone, and in the following year, 1756, he was arrested and imprisoned for debt. His friend Richardson, the novelist, relieved him.

It was evidently the publishers' desire that the *Dictionary* should gain what it could from a dedication to Lord Chesterfield; he was the *arbiter elegantiarum* of the times,

and, as Johnson said twenty-five years later, 'the best speaker in the House of Lords.' Johnson's compliance with their wish was, he said, 'a casual excuse for laziness.' Evidently he had some interview with Chesterfield, and addressed to him the *Plan* or *Prospectus* of the work. But the patron thus solicited took no notice of him, and seems a year later to have insulted Johnson, who had come as a visitor to his house. Johnson, who was at once sensitive, proud, and brave, resolved to dedicate the *Dictionary* to no man. Allusions to the affair appear in *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, and are not uncommon in *The Rambler*; the last essay expresses his stout resolution not to dedicate that work at all.

On the eve of publication Chesterfield wrote two flippant puffs of the expected *Dictionary* for *The World*. Both were certain to offend Johnson by their tone and their indecent allusion. 'I have sailed a long and painful voyage around the world of the English language; and does he now send out two cockboats to tow me into harbor?' Years later he said to Boswell: 'Sir, after making great professions, he had for many years taken no notice of me; but when my *Dictionary* was coming out, he fell a scribbling in *The World* about it. Upon which I wrote him a letter expressed in civil terms, but such as might show him that I did not mind what he said or wrote, and that I was done with him.'

The letter is essentially a Declaration of Independence for literature. It became the talk of the town, and the redoubtable Warburton congratulated Johnson. No doubt it encouraged many an obscure and struggling author. Goldsmith never dedicated except to his brother and his friends, Reynolds and Johnson. Chesterfield, quite as proud as Johnson, tried to pass off the affair with affected disinterest, even showing the letter and praising its style. But this attitude could not obliterate its significance, or lessen the admiration of Johnson's 'defensive pride' in generations to come.

## To the Right Honorable the Earl of Chesterfield

February 7, 1755.

MY LORD:

I have lately been informed by the proprietor of *The World*, that two papers, in which my *Dictionary* is recommended to the public, were written by your 5 Lordship. To be so distinguished is an honor which, being very little accustomed to favors from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited 10 your Lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address; and I could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself 'Le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre'; that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contend- 15 ing; but I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your Lordship in public, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I 20 had done all that I could; and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

Seven years, my Lord, have now passed, since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door; during which time I have been pushing on my work 25 through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it at last to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favor. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a Patron before.

30

The shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks.

Is not a Patron, my Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and, 5 when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labors, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till 10 I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the Public should consider me as owing that to a Patron, which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

15 Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favorer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, if less be possible, with less; for I have been long wakened from that dream of hope, in which I once boasted myself 20 with so much exultation,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most humble,

Most obedient servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.



## PREFATORY NOTE ON *THE PREFACE*

*THE Preface to the Dictionary* was composed rapidly at the completion of that great work. Johnson once said to Sir Joshua Reynolds: 'There are two things which I am confident that I can do very well: One is an introduction to any literary work, stating what it is to contain, and how it should be executed in the most perfect manner; the other is a conclusion showing from various causes why the execution has not been equal to what the author promised to himself and to the public.' (The *Preface* is one of his noblest utterances.) It is sublime with his splendid confidence in his powers, yet graced with his modesty and his confession of disappointment. It is ennobled with his independence, and deeply impressive with the melancholy which pervades it.

The year of publication seems to have been the most depressing of his life. Many upon whose affection he was most dependent had died, and very few of the friendships that consoled his later life were yet formed. He had not yet come to know Boswell, Goldsmith, the Thrales, or the Burneys. But apart from outward conditions, it is wholly natural for one of Johnson's temperament to experience a strong depression rather than an elevation of spirits, on completing a work to which he had so long been devoting his best energies and powers.

## Preface to the English Dictionary

It is the fate of those who toil at the lower employ-  
ments of life, to be rather driven by the fear of evil,  
than attracted by the prospect of good; to be exposed  
to censure, without hope of praise; to be disgraced  
5 by miscarriage, or punished for neglect, where success  
would have been without applause, and diligence with-  
out reward.

Among these unhappy mortals is the writer of dic-  
tionaries; whom mankind have considered, not as the  
10 pupil, but the slave of science, the pioneer of literature,  
doomed only to remove rubbish and clear obstructions  
from the paths through which Learning and Genius  
press forward to conquest and glory, without bestowing  
a smile on the humble drudge that facilitates their  
15 progress. Every other author may aspire to praise;  
the lexicographer can only hope to escape reproach,  
and even this negative recompense has been yet granted  
to very few.

I have, notwithstanding this discouragement, at-  
20 tempted a Dictionary of the English Language, which,  
while it was employed in the cultivation of every species  
of literature, has itself been hitherto neglected; suffered  
to spread, under the direction of chance, into wild  
exuberance; resigned to the tyranny of time and  
25 fashion; and exposed to the corruptions of ignorance,  
and caprices of innovation.

When I took the first survey of my undertaking, I  
found our speech copious without order, and energetic  
without rule: wherever I turned my view, there was  
30 perplexity to be disentangled and confusion to be regu-

lated; choice was to be made out of boundless variety, without any established principle of selection; adulterations were to be detected, without a settled test of purity; and modes of expression to be rejected or received, without the suffrages of any writers of classical reputation or acknowledged authority. 5

Having therefore no assistance but from general grammar, I applied myself to the perusal of our writers; and noting whatever might be of use to ascertain or illustrate any word or phrase, accumulated in time the 10 materials of a dictionary, which, by degrees, I reduced to method, establishing to myself, in the progress of the work, such rules as experience and analogy suggested to me; experience, which practice and observation were continually increasing; and analogy, which, 15 though in some words obscure, was evident in others.

In adjusting the ORTHOGRAPHY, which has been to this time unsettled and fortuitous, I found it necessary to distinguish those irregularities that are inherent in our tongue, and perhaps coeval with it, from others 20 which the ignorance or negligence of later writers has produced. Every language has its anomalies, which though inconvenient, and in themselves once unnecessary, must be tolerated among the imperfections of human things, and which require only to be registered, that 25 they may not be increased; and ascertained, that they may not be confounded: but every language has likewise its improprieties and absurdities, which it is the duty of the lexicographer to correct or proscribe. 30

As language was at its beginning merely oral, all words of necessary or common use were spoken before they were written; and while they were unfixed by any visible signs, must have been spoken with great diversity, as we now observe those who cannot read to catch 35 sounds imperfectly, and utter them negligently. When this wild and barbarous jargon was first reduced to



Johnson in a tie-wig, by Reynolds.



an alphabet, every penman endeavored to express, as he could, the sounds which he was accustomed to pronounce or to receive, and vitiated in writing such words as were already vitiated in speech. The powers of the 5 letters, when they were applied to a new language, must have been vague and unsettled, and therefore different hands would exhibit the same sound by different combinations.

From this Uncertain pronunciation arise in a great 10 part the (various dialects of the same country, which will always be observed to grow fewer, and less different, as books are multiplied; and from this arbitrary representation of sounds by letters proceeds that diversity of spelling observable in the Saxon remains, and 15 I suppose in the first books of every nation, which perplexes or destroys analogy, and produces anomalous formations, which, being once incorporated, can never be afterward dismissed or reformed.

Of this kind are the derivatives *length* from *long*, 20 *strength* from *strong*, *darling* from *dear*, *breadth* from *broad*, from *dry*, *drought*, and from *high*, *height*, which Milton, in zeal for analogy, writes *highth*. 'Quid te exempta juvat spinis de pluribus una?' To change all would be too much, and to change one is nothing.

25 This uncertainty is most frequent in the vowels, which are so capriciously pronounced, and so differently modified, by accident or affectation, not only in every province, but in every mouth, that to them, as is well known to etymologists, little regard is to be shown in the 30 deduction of one language from another.

Such defects are not errors in orthography, but spots of barbarity impressed so deep in the English language, that criticism can never wash them away: these, therefore, must be permitted to remain untouched; but many 35 words have likewise been altered by accident, or depraved by ignorance, as the pronunciation of the vulgar has been weakly followed; and some still continue to

be variously written, as authors differ in their care or skill: of these it was proper to inquire the true orthography, which I have always considered as depending on their derivation, and have therefore referred them to their original languages; thus I write *enchant*, *enchantment*, *enchanter*, after the French, and *incantation* after the Latin; thus *entire* is chosen rather than *intire*, because it passed to us not from the Latin *integer*, but from the French *entier*.

Of many words it is difficult to say whether they were immediately received from the Latin or the French, since at the time when we had dominions in France, we had Latin service in our churches. It is, however, my opinion that the French generally supplied us; for we have few Latin words, among the terms of domestic use, which are not French; but many French, which are very remote from Latin.

Even in words of which the derivation is apparent, I have been often obliged to sacrifice uniformity to custom; thus I write, in compliance with a numberless majority, *convey* and *inveigh*, *deceit* and *receipt*, *fancy* and *phantom*; sometimes the derivative varies from the primitive, as *explain* and *explanation*, *repeat* and *repetition*.

Some combinations of letters having the same power, are used indifferently without any discoverable reason of choice, as in *choak*, *choke*; *soap*, *sops*; *fewel*, *fuel*, and many others; which I have sometimes inserted twice, that those who search for them under either form, may not search in vain.

30

In examining the orthography of any doubtful word, the mode of spelling by which it is inserted in the series of the dictionary, is to be considered as that to which I give, perhaps not often rashly, the preference. I have left, in the examples, to every author his own practice unmolested, that the reader may balance suffrages, and judge between us: but this question is not

always to be determined by reputed or by real learning; some men, intent upon greater things, have thought little on sounds and derivations; some, knowing in the ancient tongues, have neglected those in which our words  
5 are commonly to be sought. Thus Hammond writes *fecibleness* for *feasibleness*, because I suppose he imagined it derived immediately from the Latin; and some words, such as *dependant*, *dependent*; *dependance*, *dependence*, vary their final syllable, as one or other  
10 language is present to the writer.

In this part of the work, where caprice has long wanted without control, and vanity sought praise by petty reformation, I have endeavored to proceed with a scholar's reverence for antiquity, and a grammarian's  
15 regard to the genius of our tongue. I have attempted few alterations, and among those few, perhaps the greater part is from the modern to the ancient practice; and I hope I may be allowed to recommend to those, whose thoughts have been perhaps employed too  
20 anxiously on verbal singularities, not to disturb, upon narrow views, or for minute propriety, the orthography of their fathers. It has been asserted, that for the law to be *known*, is of more importance than to be *right*. 'Change,' says Hooker, 'is not made without incon-  
25 venience, even from worse to better.' There is in constancy and stability a general and lasting advantage, which will always overbalance the slow improvements of gradual correction. Much less ought our written lan-  
30 guage to comply with the corruptions of oral utterance, or copy that which every variation of time or place makes different from itself, and imitate those changes, which will again be changed, while imitation is employed in observing them.

This recommendation of steadiness and uniformity  
35 does not proceed from an opinion that particular combinations of letters have much influence on human happiness; or that truth may not be successfully taught by



modes of spelling fanciful and erroneous; I am not yet so lost in lexicography as to forget that 'words are the daughters of earth, and that things are the sons of heaven.' Language is only the instrument of science, and words are but the signs of ideas: I wish, however, 5 that the instrument might be less apt to decay, and that signs might be permanent, like the things which they denote.

In settling the orthography, I have not wholly neglected the pronunciation, which I have directed, by 10 printing an accent upon the acute or elevated syllable. It will sometimes be found that the accent is placed by the author quoted, on a different syllable from that marked in the alphabetical series; it is then to be understood, that custom has varied, or that the author has, 15 in my opinion, pronounced wrong. Short directions are sometimes given where the sound of letters is irregular; and if they are sometimes omitted, defect in such minute observations will be more easily excused, than superfluity. 20

In the investigation both of the orthography and signification of words, their ETYMOLOGY was necessarily to be considered, and they were therefore to be divided into (primitives and derivatives.) A primitive word is that which can be traced no further to any English 25 root; thus *circumspect*, *circumvent*, *circumstance*, *delude*, *concave*, and *complicate*, though compounds in the Latin, are to us primitives. Derivatives, are all those that can be referred to any word in English of greater simplicity. 30

The derivatives I have referred to their primitives, with an accuracy sometimes needless; for who does not see that *remoteness* comes from *remote*, *lovely* from *love*, *concavity* from *concave*, and *demonstrative* from *demonstrate*? But this grammatical exuberance the 35 scheme of my work did not allow me to repress. It is of great importance, in examining the general fabric

of a language, to trace one word from another, by noting the usual modes of derivation and inflection; and uniformity must be preserved in systematical works; though sometimes at the expense of particular propriety.

5 Among other derivatives I have been careful to insert and elucidate the anomalous plurals of nouns and preterites of verbs, which in the Teutonic dialects are very frequent, and, though familiar to those who have always used them, interrupt and embarrass the learners  
10 of our language.

The two languages from which our primitives have been derived, are the Roman and Teutonic: under the Roman, I comprehend the French and provincial  
15 tongues; and under the Teutonic, range the Saxon, German, and all their kindred dialects. Most of our polysyllables are Roman, and our words of one syllable are very often Teutonic.

In assigning the Roman original, it has perhaps sometimes happened that I have mentioned only the Latin,  
20 when the word was borrowed from the French; and considering myself as employed only in the illustration of my own language, I have not been very careful to observe whether the Latin would be pure or barbarous, or the French elegant or obsolete.

25 For the Teutonic etymologies, I am commonly indebted to Junius and Skinner, the only names which I have forborne to quote when I copied their books; not that I might appropriate their labors or usurp their honors, but that I might spare a perpetual  
30 repetition by one general acknowledgment. Of these, whom I ought not to mention but with the reverence due to instructors and benefactors, Junius appears to have excelled in extent of learning, and Skinner in rectitude of understanding. Junius was accurately skilled in all  
35 the northern languages, Skinner probably examined the ancient and remoter dialects only by occasional inspection into dictionaries; but the learning of Junius is

Ref.

often of no other use than to show him a track by which he may deviate from his purpose, to which Skinner always presses forward by the shortest way. Skinner is often ignorant, but never ridiculous: Junius is always full of knowledge; but his variety distracts his judgment, and his learning is very frequently disgraced by his absurdities. 5

The votaries of the northern muses will not perhaps easily restrain their indignation, when they find the name of Junius thus degraded by a disadvantageous comparison; but whatever reverence is due to his diligence, or his attainments, it can be no criminal degree of censoriousness to charge that etymologist with want of judgment, who can seriously derive *dream* from *drama*, because 'life is a drama and a drama is a dream'; and who declares with a tone of defiance, that no man can fail to derive *moan* from *μόνος*, *monos*, *single* or *solitary*, who considers that grief naturally loves to be alone. 15

Our knowledge of the northern literature is so scanty, that of words undoubtedly Teutonic, the original is not always to be found in any ancient language; and I have therefore inserted Dutch or German substitutes, which I consider not as radical, but parallel, not as the parents, but sisters of the English. 20

The words which are represented as thus related by descent or cognation, do not always agree in sense; for it is incident to words, as to their authors, to degenerate from their ancestors, and to change their manners when they change their country. It is sufficient, in etymological inquiries, if the senses of kindred words be found such as may easily pass into each other, or such as may both be referred to one general idea. 25

The etymology, so far as it is yet known, was easily found in the volumes, where it is particularly and professedly delivered; and, by proper attention to the rules of derivation, the orthography was soon adjusted. But 35

to COLLECT THE WORDS of our language was a task of greater difficulty: the deficiency of dictionaries was immediately apparent; and when they were exhausted, what was yet wanting must be sought by fortuitous and unguided excursions into books, and gleaned as industry should find, or chance should offer it, in the boundless chaos of a living speech. My search, however, has been either skilful or lucky; for I have much augmented the vocabulary.

10 As my design was a dictionary, common or appellative, I have omitted all words which have relation to proper names; such as *Arian*, *Socinian*, *Calvinist*, *Benedictine*, *Mahometan*; but have retained those of a more general nature, as *Heathen*, *Pagan*.

15 Of the terms of art I have received such as could be found either in books of science or technical dictionaries; and have often inserted, from philosophical writers, words which are supported perhaps only by a single authority, and which, being not admitted into general use, stand yet as candidates or probationers, and must depend for their adoption on the suffrage of futurity. The words which our authors have introduced by their knowledge of foreign languages, or ignorance of their own, by vanity or wantonness, by compliance  
25 with fashion or lust of innovation, I have registered as they occurred, though commonly only to censure them, and warn others against the folly of naturalizing useless foreigners to the injury of the natives.

I have not rejected any by design, merely because  
30 they were unnecessary or exuberant; but have received those which by different writers have been differently formed, as *viscid*, and *viscidity*, *viscous*, and *viscosity*.

~~Compounded or double words~~ I have seldom noted, except when they obtain a signification different from  
35 that which the components have in their simple state. Thus *highwayman*, *woodman*, and *horsecourser*, require an explanation; but of *thieflike*, or *coachdriver*, no no-

tice was needed, because the primitives contain the meaning of the compounds.

Words arbitrarily formed by a constant and settled analogy, like diminutive adjectives in *ish*, as *greenish*, *bluish*; adverbs in *ly*, as *dully*, *openly*; substantives in *ness*, as *vileness*, *faultiness*; were less diligently sought, and many sometimes have been omitted, when I had no authority that invited me to insert them; not that they are not genuine, and regular offsprings of English roots, but because their relation to the primitive being 10 always the same, their signification cannot be mistaken.

The verbal nouns in *ing*, such as the *keeping* of the castle, the *leading* of the army, are always neglected; or placed only to illustrate the sense of the verb, except 15 when they signify things as well as actions, and have therefore a plural number, as *dwelling*, *living*; or have an absolute and abstract signification, as *coloring*, *painting*, *learning*.

The participles are likewise omitted, unless, by signifying 20 rather habit or quality than action, they take the nature of adjectives; as a *thinking* man, a man of prudence; a *pacing* horse, a horse that can pace: these I have ventured to call *participial adjectives*. But neither are these always inserted, because they are commonly 25 to be understood without any danger of mistake, by consulting the verb.

Obsolete words are admitted when they are found in authors not obsolete, or when they have any force or beauty that may deserve revival. 30

As composition is one of the chief characteristics of a language, I have endeavored to make some reparation for the universal negligence of my predecessors, by inserting great numbers of compounded words, as may be found under *after*, *fore*, *new*, *night*, *fair*, and many 35 more. These, numerous as they are, might be multiplied, but that use and curiosity are here satisfied, and the

frame of our language and modes of our combination amply discovered.

Of some forms of composition, such as that by which *re* is prefixed to note *repetition*, and *un* to signify *contrariety* or *privation*, all the examples cannot be accumulated, because the use of these particles, if not wholly arbitrary, is so little limited, that they are hourly affixed to new words as occasion requires, or is imagined to require them.

10 There is another kind of composition more frequent in our language than perhaps in any other, from which arises to foreigners the greatest difficulty. We modify the signification of many verbs by a particle subjoined; as to *come off*, to escape by a fetch; to *fall on*, to attack; 15 to *fall off*, to apostatize; to *break off*, to stop abruptly; to *bear out*, to justify; to *fall in*, to comply; to *give over*, to cease; to *set off*, to embellish; to *set in*, to begin a continual tenor; to *set out*, to begin a course or journey; to *take off*, to copy; with innumerable ex- 20 pressions of the same kind, of which some appear wildly irregular, being so far distant from the sense of the simple words, that no sagacity will be able to trace the steps by which they arrived at the present use. These I have noted with great care; and though I can- 25 not flatter myself that the collection is complete, I believe I have so far assisted the students of our language that this kind of phraseology will be no longer insuperable; and the combinations of verbs and particles, by chance omitted, will be easily explained by comparison 30 with those that may be found.

Many words yet stand supported only by the name of Bailey, Ainsworth, Philips, or the contracted *Dict.* for Dictionaries, subjoined; of these I am not always certain that they are read in any book but the works 35 of lexicographers. Of such I have omitted many, because I had never read them; and many I have inserted, because they may perhaps exist, though they have

escaped my notice: they are, however, to be yet considered as resting only upon the credit of former dictionaries. Others, which I considered as useful, or know to be proper, though I could not at present support them by authorities, I have suffered to stand upon my own attestation, claiming the same privilege with my predecessors, of being sometimes credited without proof.

The words, thus selected and disposed, are grammatically considered; they are referred to the different parts of speech; traced when they are irregularly inflected, through their various terminations; and illustrated by observations, not indeed of great or striking importance, separately considered, but necessary to the elucidation of our language, and hitherto neglected or forgotten by English grammarians. 15

That part of my work on which I expect malignity most frequently to fasten, is the EXPLANATION; in which I cannot hope to satisfy those, who are perhaps not inclined to be pleased, since I have not always been able to satisfy myself. To interpret a language by itself is very difficult; many words cannot be explained by synonymes, because the idea signified by them has not more than one appellation; nor by paraphrase, because simple ideas cannot be described. When the nature of things is unknown, or the notion unsettled and indefinite, and various in various minds, the words by which such notions are conveyed, or such things denoted, will be ambiguous and perplexed. And such is the fate of hapless lexicography, that not only darkness, but light, impedes and distresses it; things may be not only too little, but too much known, to be happily illustrated. To explain, requires the use of terms less abstruse than that which is to be explained, and such terms cannot always be found; for as nothing can be proved but by supposing something intuitively known, and evident without proof, so nothing can be defined but by the use of words too plain to admit a definition. 35

Other words there are, of which the sense is too subtle and evanescent to be fixed in a paraphrase; such are all those which are by the grammarians termed expletives, and, in dead languages, are suffered to pass for empty sounds, (of no other use than to fill a verse,) or to modulate a period, but which are easily perceived in living tongues to have power and emphasis, though it be sometimes such as no other form of expression can convey.

- 10 My labor has likewise been much increased by a class of verbs too frequent in the English language, of which the signification is so loose and general, the use so vague and indeterminate, and the senses detorted so widely from the first idea, that it is hard to trace them  
15 through the maze of variation, to catch them on the brink of utter inanity, to circumscribe them by any limitations, or interpret them by any words of distinct and settled meaning; such are *bear, break, come, cast, full, get, give, do, put, set, go, run, make, take, turn, throw.*  
20 If of these the whole power is not accurately delivered, it must be remembered, that while our language is yet living, and variable by the caprice of every one that speaks it, these words are hourly shifting their relations, and can no more be ascertained in a dictionary,  
25 than a grove, in the agitation of a storm, can be accurately delineated from its picture in the water.

The particles are among all nations applied with so great latitude, that they are not easily reducible under any regular scheme of explication: this difficulty is  
30 not less, nor perhaps greater, in English, than in other languages. I have labored them with diligence, I hope with success; such at least as can be expected in a task, which no man, however learned or sagacious, has yet been able to perform.

- 35 Some words there are which I cannot explain, because I do not understand them; these might have been omitted very often with little inconvenience, but I would not



so far indulge my vanity as to decline this confession: for when Tully owns himself ignorant whether *lessus*, in the twelve tables, means a *funeral song*, or *mourning garment*; and Aristotle doubts whether *οἰπέβς* in the *Iliad* signifies a *mule*, or *muleteer*, I may surely without shame, leave some obscurities to happier industry, or future information.

The rigor of interpretative lexicography requires that the explanation, and the word explained should be always reciprocal; this I have always endeavored, but 10 could not always attain. Words are seldom exactly synonymous; a new term was not introduced, but because the former was thought inadequate: names, therefore, have often many ideas, but few ideas have many names. It was then necessary to use the proximate word, for the deficiency of single terms can very 15 seldom be supplied by circumlocution; nor is the inconvenience great of such mutilated interpretations, because the sense may easily be collected entire from the examples. 20

In every word of extensive use, it was requisite to mark the progress of its meaning, and show by what gradations of intermediate sense it has passed from its primitive to its remote and accidental signification; so that every foregoing explanation should tend to that 25 which follows, and the series be regularly concatenated from the first notion to the last.

This is specious, but not always practicable; kindred senses may be so interwoven, that the perplexity cannot be disentangled, nor any reason be assigned why one 30 should be ranged before the other. When the radical idea branches out into parallel ramifications, how can a consecutive series be formed of senses in their nature collateral? The shades of meaning sometimes pass imperceptibly into each other, so that though on one side 35 they apparently differ, yet it is impossible to mark the point of contact. Ideas of the same race, though not

exactly alike, are sometimes so little different, that no words can express the dissimilitude, though the mind easily perceives it when they are exhibited together; and sometimes there is such a confusion of acceptations, 5 that discernment is wearied and distinction puzzled, and perseverance herself hurries to an end, by crowding together what she cannot separate.

These complaints of difficulty will, by those that have never considered words beyond their popular use, 10 be thought only the jargon of a man willing to magnify his labors, and procure veneration to his studies by involution and obscurity. But every art is obscure to those that have not learned it; this uncertainty of terms, and commixture of ideas, is well known to those 15 who have joined philosophy with grammar; and if I have not expressed them very clearly, it must be remembered that I am speaking of that which words are insufficient to explain.

The original sense of words is often driven out of 20 use by their metaphorical acceptations, yet must be inserted for the sake of a regular origination. Thus I know not whether *ardor* is used for *material heat*, or whether *flagrant*, in English, ever signifies the same with *burning*; yet such are the primitive ideas of these words, 25 which are therefore set first, though without examples, that the figurative senses may be commodiously deduced.

Such is the exuberance of signification which many words have obtained, that it was scarcely possible to 30 collect all their senses; sometimes the meaning of derivatives must be sought in the mother term, and sometimes deficient explanations of the primitive may be supplied in the train of derivation. In any case of doubt or difficulty, it will be always proper to examine 35 all the words of the same race; for some words are slightly passed over to avoid repetition, some admitted easier and clearer explanation than others, and all will

be better understood, as they are considered in greater variety of structures and relations.

All the interpretations of words are not written with the same skill, or the same happiness: things equally easy in themselves, are not all equally easy to any single mind. Every writer of a long work commits errors, where there appears neither ambiguity to mislead, nor obscurity to confound him; and in a search like this, many felicities of expression will be casually overlooked, many convenient parallels will be forgotten, 10 and many particulars will admit improvement from a mind utterly unequal to the whole performance.

But many seeming faults are to be imputed rather to the nature of the undertaking, than the negligence of the performer. Thus some explanations are unavoid- 15 ably reciprocal or circular, as *hind, the female of the stag; stag, the male of the hind*: sometimes easier words are changed into harder, as *burial* into *sepulture*, or *interment*, *drier* into *desiccative*, *dryness* into *siccity* or *aridity*, *fit* into *paroxysm*; for the easiest word, what- 20 ever it be, can never be translated into one more easy. But easiness and difficulty are merely relative; and if the present prevalence of our language should invite foreigners to this Dictionary, many will be assisted by those words which now seem only to increase or produce 25 obscurity. For this reason I have endeavored frequently to join a Teutonic and Roman interpretation, as to *cheer*, to *gladden* or *exhilarate*, that every learner of English may be assisted by his own tongue.

The solution of all difficulties, and the supply of all 30 defects must be sought in the examples, subjoined to the various senses of each word, and ranged according to the time of their authors.

When I first collected these authorities, I was desirous that every quotation should be useful to some 35 other end than the illustration of a word; I therefore extracted from philosophers principles of science; from

historians remarkable facts; from chymists complete processes; from divines striking exhortations; and from poets beautiful descriptions. Such is design, while it is yet at a distance from execution. When the time  
5 called upon me to range this accumulation of elegance and wisdom into an alphabetical series, I soon discovered that the bulk of my volumes would fright away the student, and was forced to depart from my scheme of including all that was pleasing or useful in English  
10 literature, and reduce my transcripts very often to clusters of words, in which scarcely any meaning is retained; thus to the weariness of copying, I was condemned to add the vexation of expunging. Some passages I have yet spared, which may relieve the labor  
15 of verbal searches, and intersperse with verdure and flowers the dusty deserts of barren philology.

The examples, thus mutilated, are no longer to be considered as conveying the sentiments or doctrine of their authors; the word for the sake of which they are  
20 inserted, with all its appendant clauses, has been carefully preserved; but it may sometimes happen, by hasty detraction, that the general tendency of the sentence may be changed: the divine may desert his tenets, or the philosopher his system.

25 Some of the examples have been taken from writers who were never mentioned as masters of elegance, or models of style; but words must be sought where they are used; and in what pages, eminent for purity, can terms of manufacture or agriculture be found? Many  
30 quotations serve no other purpose than that of proving the bare existence of words, and are therefore selected with less scrupulousness than those which are to teach their structures and relations.

My purpose was to admit no testimony of living  
35 authors, that I might not be misled by partiality, and that none of my contemporaries might have reason to complain; nor have I departed from this resolution, but

when some performance of uncommon excellence excited my veneration, when my memory supplied me, from late books, with an example that was wanting, or when my heart, in the tenderness of friendship, solicited admission for a favorite name. 5

So far have I been from any care to grace my pages with modern decorations, that I have studiously endeavored to collect examples and authorities from the writers before the Restoration, whose works I regard as the 'wells of English undefiled,' as the pure sources 10 of genuine diction. Our language, for almost a century, has, by the concurrence of many causes, been gradually departing from its original Teutonic character, and deviating towards a Gallic structure and phraseology, from which it ought to be our endeavor to recall 15 it, by making our ancient volumes the ground-work of style, admitting among the additions of later times, only such as may supply real deficiencies, such as are readily adopted by the genius of our tongue, and incorporate easily with our native idioms. 20

But as every language has a time of rudeness antecedent to perfection, as well as of false refinement and declension, I have been cautious lest my zeal for antiquity might drive me into times too remote, and crowd my book with words now no longer understood. I have 25 fixed Sidney's work for the boundary, beyond which I make few excursions. From the authors which rose in the time of Elizabeth, a speech might be formed adequate to all the purposes of use and elegance. If the language of theology were extracted from Hooker 30 and the translation of the Bible; the terms of natural knowledge from Bacon; the phrases of policy, war, and navigation from Raleigh; the dialect of poetry and fiction from Spenser and Sidney; and the diction of common life from Shakespeare, few ideas would be lost 35 to mankind, for want of English words in which they might be expressed.

It is not sufficient that a word is found, unless it be so combined as that its meaning is apparently determined by the tract and tenor of the sentence; such passages I have therefore chosen, and when it happened that any author gave a definition of a term, or such an explanation as is equivalent to a definition, I have placed his authority as a supplement to my own, without regard to the chronological order that is otherwise observed.

10 Some words, indeed, stand unsupported by any authority, but they are commonly derivative nouns or adverbs, formed from their primitives by regular and constant analogy, or names of things seldom occurring in books, or words of which I have reason to doubt the  
15 existence.

There is more danger of censure from the multiplicity than paucity of examples; authorities will sometimes seem to have been accumulated without necessity or use, and perhaps some will be found, which might, without  
20 loss, have been omitted. But a work of this kind is not hastily to be charged with superfluities; those quotations, which to careless or unskillful perusers appear only to repeat the same sense, will often exhibit, to a more accurate examiner, diversities of signification, or, at  
25 least, afford different shades of the same meaning: one will show the word applied to persons, another to things; one will express an ill, another a good, and a third a neutral sense; one will prove the expression genuine from an ancient author; another will show it elegant  
30 from a modern: a doubtful authority is corroborated by another of more credit; an ambiguous sentence is ascertained by a passage clear and determinate: the word, how often soever repeated, appears with new associates and in different combinations, and every quotation contributes something to the stability or enlargement of the  
35 language.

When words are used equivocally, I receive them in

either sense; when they are metaphorical, I adopt them in their primitive acceptance.

I have sometimes, though rarely, yielded to the temptation of exhibiting a genealogy of sentiments, by showing how one author copied the thoughts and diction of 5 another: such quotations are indeed little more than repetitions, which might justly be censured, did they not gratify the mind, by affording a kind of intellectual history.

The various syntactical structures occurring in the 10 examples have been carefully noted; the license or negligence with which many words have been hitherto used, has made our style capricious and indeterminate; when the different combinations of the same word are exhibited together, the preference is readily given to 15 propriety, and I have often endeavored to direct the choice.

Thus have I labored by settling the orthography, displaying the analogy, regulating the structures, and ascertaining the signification of English words, to per- 20 form all the parts of a faithful lexicographer: but I have not always executed my own scheme, or satisfied my own expectations. The work, whatever proofs of diligence and attention it may exhibit, is yet capable of many improvements: the orthography which I recom- 25 mend is still controvertible; the etymology which I adopt is uncertain, and perhaps frequently erroneous; the explanations are sometimes too much contracted, and sometimes too much diffused; the significations are distinguished rather with subtlety than skill, 30 and the attention is harassed with unnecessary minuteness.

The examples are too often injudiciously truncated, and perhaps sometimes—I hope very rarely—alleged in a mistaken sense; for in making this collection I trusted 35 more to memory, than, in a state of disquiet and embarrassment, memory can contain, and purposed to sup-

ply at the review what was left incomplete in the first transcription.

Many terms appropriated to particular occupations, though necessary and significant, are undoubtedly omitted; and of the words most studiously considered and exemplified, many senses have escaped observation.

Yet these failures, however frequent, may admit extenuation and apology. To have attempted much is always laudable, even when the enterprise is above the strength that undertakes it: to rest below his own aim is incident to every one whose fancy is active, and whose views are comprehensive; nor is any man satisfied with himself because he has done much, but because he can conceive little. When first I engaged in this work, I resolved to leave neither words nor things unexamined, and pleased myself with a prospect of the hours which I should revel away in feasts of literature, the obscure recesses of northern learning which I should enter and ransack, the treasures with which I expected every search into those neglected mines to reward my labor, and the triumph with which I should display my acquisitions to mankind. When I had thus inquired into the original of words, I resolved to show likewise my attention to things; to pierce deep into every science, to inquire the nature of every substance of which I inserted the name, to limit every idea by a definition strictly logical, and exhibit every production of art or nature in an accurate description, that my book might be in place of all other dictionaries whether appellative or technical. But these were the dreams of a poet doomed at last to wake a lexicographer. I soon found that it is too late to look for instruments, when the work calls for execution, and that whatever abilities I had brought to my task, with those I must finally perform it. To deliberate whenever I doubted, to inquire whenever I was ignorant, would have protracted the undertaking without end, and, perhaps, with-



out much improvement; for I did not find by my first experiments, that what I had not of my own was easily to be obtained: I saw that one inquiry only gave occasion to another, that book referred to book, that to search was not always to find, and to find was not always to be informed; and that thus to pursue perfection, was, like the first inhabitants of Arcadia, to chase the sun, which, when they had reached the hill where he seemed to rest, was still beheld at the same distance from them. 10

I then contracted my design, determining to confide in myself, and no longer to solicit auxiliaries which produced more incumbrance than assistance; by this I obtained at least one advantage, that I set limits to my work, which would in time be ended, though not 15 completed.

Despondency has never so far prevailed as to depress me to negligence; some faults will at last appear to be the effects of anxious diligence and persevering activity. The nice and subtle ramifications of meaning were 20 not easily avoided by a mind intent upon accuracy, and convinced of the necessity of disentangling combinations, and separating similitudes. Many of the distinctions which to common readers appear useless and idle, will be found real and important by men versed in the school 25 philosophy, without which no dictionary can ever be accurately compiled, or skillfully examined.

Some senses, however, there are, which, though not the same, are yet so nearly allied, that they are often confounded. Most men think indistinctly, and therefore 30 cannot speak with exactness; and consequently some examples might be indifferently put to either signification: this uncertainty is not to be imputed to me, who do not form, but register the language; who do not teach men how they should think, but relate how they have 35 hitherto expressed their thoughts.

The imperfect sense of some examples I lamented,

but could not remedy, and hope they will be compensated by innumerable passages selected with propriety, and preserved with exactness; some shining with sparks of imagination, and some replete with treasures of wisdom.

The orthography and etymology, though imperfect, are not imperfect for want of care, but because care will not always be successful, and recollection or information come too late for use.

10 That many terms of art and manufacture are omitted, must be frankly acknowledged; but for this defect I may boldly allege that it was unavoidable; I could not visit caverns to learn the miner's language, nor take a voyage to perfect my skill in the dialect of navigation,  
15 nor visit the warehouses of merchants, and shops of artificers, to gain the names of wares, tools, and operations, of which no mention is found in books; what favorable accident or easy inquiry brought within my reach, has not been neglected; but it had been a hopeless labor to glean up words, by courting living information, and contesting with the sullenness of one, and the roughness of another.

To furnish the Academicians *della Crusca* with words of this kind, a series of comedies called *La Fiera*, or  
25 *The Fair*, was professedly written by Buonaroti; but I had no such assistant, and therefore was content to want what they must have wanted likewise, had they not luckily been so supplied.

Nor are all words which are not found in the vocabulary, to be lamented as omissions. Of the laborious and mercantile part of the people, the diction is in a great measure casual and mutable; many of their terms are formed for some temporary or local convenience, and though current at certain times and places, are in others  
35 utterly unknown. This fugitive cant, which is always in a state of increase or decay, cannot be regarded as any part of the durable materials of a language, and there-

fore must be suffered to perish with other things unworthy of preservation.

Care will sometimes betray to the appearance of negligence. He that is catching opportunities which seldom occur, will suffer those to pass by unregarded, which 5 he expects hourly to return; he that is searching for rare and remote things, will neglect those that are obvious and familiar: thus many of the most common and cursory words have been inserted with little illustration, because in gathering the authorities, I forebore to copy 10 those which I thought likely to occur whenever they were wanted. It is remarkable that, in reviewing my collection, I found the word *sea* unexemplified.

Thus it happens, that in things difficult there is danger from ignorance, and in things easy, from confidence; the 15 mind, afraid of greatness, and disdainful of littleness, hastily withdraws herself from painful searches, and passes with scornful rapidity over tasks not adequate to her powers; sometimes too secure for caution, and again too anxious for vigorous effort; sometimes idle in 20 a plain path, and sometimes distracted in labyrinths, and dissipated by different intentions.

A large work is difficult because it is large, even though all its parts might singly be performed with facility; where there are many things to be done, each 25 must be allowed its share of time and labor, in the proportion only which it bears to the whole; nor can it be expected, that the stones which form the dome of a temple, should be squared and polished like the diamond of a ring. 30

Of the event of this work, for which, having labored it with so much application, I cannot but have some degree of parental fondness, it is natural to form conjectures. Those who have been persuaded to think well of my design, will require that it should fix our lan- 35 guage, and put a stop to those alterations which time and chance have hitherto been suffered to make in it

without opposition. With this consequence I will confess that I flattered myself for a while; but now begin to fear that I have indulged expectation which neither reason nor experience can justify. When we see men  
5 grow old and die at a certain time one after another, from century to century, we laugh at the elixir that promises to prolong life to a thousand years; and with equal justice may the lexicographer be derided, who being able to produce no example of a nation that has  
10 preserved their words and phrases from mutability, shall imagine that his dictionary can embalm his language, and secure it from corruption and decay, that it is in his power to change sublunary nature, and clear the world at once from folly, vanity, and affectation.

15 With this hope, however, academies have been instituted, to guard the avenues of their languages, to retain fugitives, and repulse intruders; but their vigilance and activity have hitherto been vain; sounds are too volatile and subtile for legal restraints; to enchain syllables,  
20 and to lash the wind, are equally the undertakings of pride, unwilling to measure its desires by its strength. The French language has visibly changed under the inspection of the Academy; the style of Amelot's translation of Father Paul is observed by Le Courayer to be  
25 *un peu passé*; and no Italian will maintain, that the diction of any modern writer is not perceptibly different from that of Boccace, Machiavel, or Caro.

Total and sudden transformations of a language seldom happen; conquests and migrations are now very  
30 rare: but there are other causes of change, which, though slow in their operation, and invisible in their progress, are perhaps as much superior to human resistance, as the revolutions of the sky, or intumescence of the tide. Commerce, however necessary, however lucrative, as it  
35 depraves the manners, corrupts the language; they that have frequent intercourse with strangers, to whom they endeavor to accommodate themselves, must in time learn

a mingled dialect, like the jargon which serves the traffickers on the Mediterranean and Indian coasts. This will not always be confined to the exchange, the warehouse, or the port, but will be communicated by degrees to other ranks of the people, and be at last incorporated with the current speech.

There are likewise internal causes equally forcible. The language most likely to continue long without alterations, would be that of a nation raised a little, and but a little, above barbarity, secluded from strangers, and 10 totally employed in procuring the conveniences of life; either without books, or, like some of the Mahometan countries, with very few: men thus busied and unlearned, having only such words as common use requires, would perhaps long continue to express the same notions by 15 the same signs. But no such constancy can be expected in a people polished by arts, and classed by subordination, where one part of the community is sustained and accommodated by the labor of the other. Those who have much leisure to think, will always be 20 enlarging the stock of ideas; and every increase of knowledge, whether real or fancied, will produce new words, or combination of words. When the mind is unchained from necessity, it will range after convenience; when it is left at large in the fields of speculation, 25 it will shift opinions; as any custom is disused, the words that expressed it must perish with it; as any opinion grows popular, it will innovate speech in the same proportion as it alters practice.

As by the cultivation of various sciences a language 30 is amplified, it will be more furnished with words deflected from their original sense; the geometrician will talk of a courtier's zenith or the eccentric virtue of a wild hero, and the physician, of sanguine expectations and phlegmatic delays. Copiousness of speech will give 35 opportunities to capricious choice, by which some words will be preferred, and others degraded: vicissitudes of

fashion will enforce the use of new, or extend the signification of known terms. The tropes of poetry will make hourly encroachments, and the metaphorical will become the current sense: pronunciation will be varied  
 5 by levity or ignorance, and the pen must at length comply with the tongue; illiterate writers will, at one time or other, by public infatuation, rise into renown, who, not knowing the original import of words, will use them with colloquial licentiousness, confound distinction, and  
 10 forget propriety. As politeness increases, some expressions will be considered as too gross and vulgar for the delicate, others as too formal and ceremonious for the gay and airy; new phrases are therefore adopted, which must for the same reasons be in time dismissed.  
 15 Swift, in his petty treatise on the English language, allows that new words must sometimes be introduced, but proposes that none should be suffered to become obsolete. But what makes a word obsolete, more than general agreement to forbear it? and how shall it be  
 20 continued, when it conveys an offensive idea, or recalled again into the mouths of mankind, when it has once become unfamiliar by disuse, and unpleasing by unfamiliarity?

There is another cause of alteration more prevalent  
 25 than any other, which yet in the present state of the world cannot be obviated. A mixture of two languages will produce a third distinct from both, and they will always be mixed, where the chief parts of education, and the most conspicuous accomplishment, is skill in  
 30 ancient or in foreign tongues. He that has long cultivated another language, will find its words and combinations crowd upon his memory; and haste and negligence, refinement and affectation, will obtrude borrowed terms and exotic expressions.

35 The great pest of speech is frequency of translation. No book was ever turned from one language into another, without imparting something of its native idiom;

this is the most mischievous and comprehensive innovation; single words may enter by thousands, and the fabric of the tongue continue the same; but new phraseology changes much at once; it alters not the single stones of the building, but the order of the columns. 5  
If an academy should be established for the cultivation of our style—which I, who can never wish to see dependence multiplied, hope the spirit of English liberty will hinder or destroy—let them, instead of compiling grammars and dictionaries, endeavor, with all their influence, to stop the license of translators, whose idleness and ignorance, if it be suffered to proceed, will reduce us to babble a dialect of France. 10

If the changes that we fear be thus irresistible, what remains but to acquiesce with silence, as in the other insurmountable distresses of humanity? It remains that we retard what we cannot repel, that we palliate what we cannot cure. Life may be lengthened by care, though death cannot be ultimately defeated: tongues, like governments, have a natural tendency to degeneration; we 20 have long preserved our constitution, let us make some struggles for our language.

In hope of giving longevity to that which its own nature forbids to be immortal, I have devoted this book, the labor of years, to the honor of my country, that 25 we may no longer yield the palm of philology, without a contest, to the nations of the continent. The chief glory of every people arises from its authors: whether I shall add any thing by my own writings to the reputation of English literature, must be left to time: much 30 of my life has been lost under the pressures of disease; much has been trifled away; and much has always been spent in provision for the day that was passing over me; but I shall not think my employment useless or ignoble, if by my assistance foreign nations, and distant 35 ages, gain access to the propagators of knowledge, and understand the teachers of truth; if my labors afford

light to the repositories of science, and add celebrity to Bacon, to Hooker, to Milton, and to Boyle.

When I am animated by this wish, I look with pleasure on my book, however defective, and deliver it to the world with the spirit of a man that has endeavored well. That it will immediately become popular I have not promised to myself: a few wild blunders, and risible absurdities, from which no work of such multiplicity was ever free, may for a time furnish folly with laughter, and harden ignorance into contempt; but useful diligence will at last prevail, and there never can be wanting some who distinguish desert; who will consider that no dictionary of a living tongue ever can be perfect, since, while it is hastening to publication, some words are budding, and some falling away; that a whole life cannot be spent upon syntax and etymology, and that even a whole life would not be sufficient; that he, whose design includes whatever language can express, must often speak of what he does not understand; that a writer will sometimes be hurried by eagerness to the end, and sometimes faint with weariness under a task which Scaliger compares to the labors of the anvil and the mine; that what is obvious is not always known, and what is known is not always present; that sudden fits of inadvertency will surprise vigilance, slight avocations will seduce attention, and casual eclipses of the mind will darken learning; and that the writer shall often in vain trace his memory at the moment of need, for that which yesterday he knew with intuitive readiness, and which will come uncalled into his thoughts to-morrow.

In this work, when it shall be found that much is omitted, let it not be forgotten that much likewise is performed; and though no book was ever spared out of tenderness to the author, and the world is little solicitous to know whence proceed the faults of that which it condemns; yet it may gratify curiosity to inform it, that the English Dictionary was written with



little assistance of the learned, and without any patronage of the great; not in the soft obscurities of retirement, or under the shelter of academic bowers, but amidst inconvenience and distraction, in sickness and in sorrow. It may repress the triumph of malignant criticism to 5 observe, that if our language is not here fully displayed, I have only failed in an attempt which no human powers have hitherto completed. If the lexicons of ancient tongues, now immutably fixed, and comprised in a few volumes, be yet, after the toil of successive ages, inadequate and delusive; if the aggregated knowledge, and co-operating diligence of the Italian academicians, did not secure them from the censure of Beni; if the embodied critics of France, when fifty years had been spent upon their work, were obliged to change its econ- 15 omy, and give their second edition another form, I may surely be contented without the praise of perfection, which, if I could obtain, in this gloom of solitude, what would it avail me? I have protracted my work till most of those whom I wished to please have sunk into 20 the grave, and success and miscarriage are empty sounds: I therefore dismiss it with frigid tranquillity, having little to fear or hope from censure or from praise.

## PREFATORY NOTE ON *THE RAMBLER*

IN 1750, while in the midst of his work on the *Dictionary*, Johnson began to write a series of essays which he called *The Rambler*. As he entered upon his task he composed the following prayer:

‘Almighty God, the giver of all good things, without whose help all labor is ineffectual, and without whose grace all wisdom is folly; grant I beseech thee, that in this undertaking thy Holy Spirit may not be withheld from me, but that I may promote thy glory, and the salvation of myself and others; grant this, O Lord, for the sake of thy Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.’

For two years he wrote two essays a week, producing them with greatest rapidity, and often sending them to the press without reading them over. In the last essay he wrote: ‘He that condemns himself to compose on a stated day, will often bring to his task an attention dissipated, a memory embarrassed, an imagination overwhelmed, a mind distracted with anxieties, a body languishing with disease; he will labor on a barren topic, till it is too late to change it; or, in the ardor of invention, diffuse his thoughts into wild exuberance, which the pressing hour of publication cannot suffer judgment to examine or reduce.’

Johnson intended that the essays should be anonymous, but the author was soon guessed. During the period of their first publication the essays were not popular, and the reason is obvious. But when afterwards collected and issued in bound volumes they gained steadily in fame through the rest of the century, and by 1791 had passed into twelve editions, exceeding in sale any other periodical essay after the reign of Anne.

*The Rambler* brought Johnson two of his warmest friends—Bennet Langton and Arthur Murphy—both of whom

found him living in untidy confusion. Ten years later Goldsmith's admiration of *The Rambler* was charmingly expressed in his *jeu d'esprit* in the Stage-coach of Fame, in *The Bee* (No. 5). It was *The Rambler*, not the *Dictionary* which got Johnson his place in that vehicle.

## The Rambler

No. 4. SATURDAY, March 31, 1750

*Simul et jucunda et idonea dicere vitæ.*

HOR. *Art of Poetry*, 334.

And join both profit and delight in one.—CREECH.

THE works of fiction, with which the present generation seems more particularly delighted, are such as exhibit life in its true state, diversified only by accidents that daily happen in the world, and influenced by passions and qualities which are really to be found in conversing with mankind.

This kind of writing may be termed, not improperly, the comedy of romance, and is to be conducted nearly by the rules of comic poetry. Its province is to bring about natural events by easy means, and to keep up curiosity without the help of wonder: it is therefore precluded from the machines and expedients of the heroic romance, and can neither employ giants to snatch away a lady from the nuptial rites, nor knights to bring her back from captivity; it can neither bewilder its personages in deserts, nor lodge them in imaginary castles.

I remember a remark made by Scaliger upon Pontanus, that all his writings are filled with the same images; and that if you take from him his lilies and his roses, his satyrs and his dryads, he will have nothing left that can be called poetry. In like manner almost all the fictions of the last age will vanish, if you deprive them of a hermit and a wood, a battle and a shipwreck.

Why this wild strain of imagination found reception

so long in polite and learned ages, it is not easy to conceive; but we cannot wonder that while readers could be procured, the authors were willing to continue it; for when a man had by practice gained some fluency of language, he had no further care than to retire to his closet, let loose his invention, and heat his mind with incredibilities; a book was thus produced without fear of criticism, without the toil of study, without knowledge of nature, or acquaintance with life.

The task of our present writers is very different; it requires, together with that learning which is to be gained from books, that experience which can never be attained by solitary diligence, but must arise from general converse and accurate observation of the living world. Their performances have, as Horace expresses it, '*plus oneris quantum veniæ minus*,' little indulgence, and therefore more difficulty. They are engaged in portraits of which every one knows the original, and can detect any deviation from exactness of resemblance. Other writings are safe, except from the malice of learning, but these are in danger from every common reader; as the slipper ill executed was censured by a shoemaker, who happened to stop in his way at the Venus of Apelles.

But the fear of not being approved as just copiers of human manners, is not the most important concern that an author of this sort ought to have before him. These books are written chiefly to the young, the ignorant, and the idle, to whom they serve as lectures of conduct, and introductions into life. They are the entertainment of minds unfurnished with ideas, and therefore easily susceptible of impressions; not fixed by principles, and therefore easily following the current of fancy; not informed by experience, and consequently open to every false suggestion and partial account.

That the highest degree of reverence should be paid to youth, and that nothing indecent should be suffered

to approach their eyes or ears, are precepts extorted by sense and virtue from an ancient writer, by no means eminent for chastity of thought. The same kind, though not the same degree, of caution, is required in every-  
5 thing which is laid before them, to secure them from unjust prejudices, perverse opinions, and incongruous combinations of images.

In the romances formerly written, every transaction and sentiment was so remote from all that passes among  
10 men, that the reader was in very little danger of making any applications to himself; the virtues and crimes were equally beyond his sphere of activity; and he amused himself with heroes and with traitors, deliverers and persecutors, as with beings of another species, whose  
15 actions were regulated upon motives of their own, and who had neither faults nor excellencies in common with himself.

But when an adventurer is levelled with the rest of the world, and acts in such scenes of the universal  
20 drama, as may be the lot of any other man, young spectators fix their eyes upon him with closer attention, and hope, by observing his behavior and success, to regulate their own practices, when they shall be engaged in the like part.

25 For this reason these familiar histories may perhaps be made of greater use than the solemnities of professed morality, and convey the knowledge of vice and virtue with more efficacy than axioms and definitions. But if the power of example is so great as to take  
30 possession of the memory by a kind of violence, and produce effects almost without the intervention of the will, care ought to be taken, that, when the choice is unrestrained, the best examples only should be exhibited; and that which is likely to operate so strongly, should  
35 not be mischievous or uncertain in its effects:

The chief advantage which these fictions have over real life is, that their authors are at liberty, though not

to invent, yet to select objects, and to cull from the mass of mankind, those individuals upon which the attention ought most to be employed; as a diamond, though it cannot be made, may be polished by art, and placed in such situation, as to display that lustre which 5 before was buried among common stones.

It is justly considered as the greatest excellency of art, to imitate nature; but it is necessary to distinguish those parts of nature, which are most proper for imitation: greater care is still required in representing life, 10 which is so often discolored by passion, or deformed by wickedness. If the world be promiscuously described, I cannot see of what use it can be to read the account; or why it may not be as safe to turn the eye immediately upon mankind as upon a mirror which shows all that 15 presents itself without discrimination.

It is therefore not a sufficient vindication of a character, that it is drawn as it appears; for many characters ought never to be drawn: nor of a narrative, that the train of events is agreeable to observation and 20 experience; for that observation which is called knowledge of the world, will be found much more frequently to make men cunning than good. The purpose of these writings is surely not only to show mankind, but to provide that they may be seen hereafter with less hazard; to teach the means of avoiding the snares which 25 are laid by TREACHERY for INNOCENCE, without infusing any wish for that superiority with which the betrayer flatters his vanity; to give the power of counteracting fraud, without the temptation to practise it; to initiate 30 youth by mock encounters in the art of necessary defense, and to increase prudence without impairing virtue.

Many writers, for the sake of following nature, so mingle good and bad qualities in their principal personages, that they are both equally conspicuous; and 35 as we accompany them through their adventures with delight, and are led by degrees to interest ourselves

in their favor, we lose the abhorrence of their faults, because they do not hinder our pleasure, or perhaps, regard them with some kindness, for being united with so much merit.

5 There have been men indeed splendidly wicked, whose endowments threw a brightness on their crimes, and whom scarce any villany made perfectly detestable, because they never could be wholly divested of their excellencies; but such have been in all ages the great  
10 corrupters of the world, and their resemblance ought no more to be preserved, than the art of murdering without pain.

Some have advanced, without due attention to the consequence of this notion, that certain virtues have their  
15 correspondent faults, and therefore that to exhibit either apart is to deviate from probability. Thus men are observed by Swift to be 'grateful in the same degree as they are resentful.' This principle, with others of the same kind, supposes man to act from a brute impulse,  
20 and pursue a certain degree of inclination, without any choice of the object; for, otherwise, though it should be allowed that gratitude and resentment arise from the same constitution of the passions, it follows not that they will be equally indulged when reason is consulted;  
25 yet, unless that consequence be admitted, this sagacious maxim becomes an empty sound, without any relation to practice or to life.

Nor is it evident, that even the first motions to these effects are always in the same proportion. For pride,  
30 which produces quickness of resentment, will obstruct gratitude, by unwillingness to admit that inferiority which obligation implies; and it is very unlikely that he who cannot think he receives a favor, will acknowledge or repay it.

85 It is of the utmost importance to mankind, that positions of this tendency should be laid open and confuted; for while men consider good and evil as spring-



ing from the same root, they will spare the one for the sake of the other, and in judging, if not of others, at least of themselves, will be apt to estimate their virtues by their vices. To this fatal error all those will contribute, who confound the colors of right and wrong, and, instead of helping to settle their boundaries, mix them with so much art, that no common mind is able to disunite them. 5

In narratives where historical veracity has no place, I cannot discover why there should not be exhibited the most perfect idea of virtue; of virtue not angelical, nor above probability, for what we cannot credit, we shall never imitate, but the highest and purest that humanity can reach, which, exercised in such trials as the various revolutions of things shall bring upon it, may, by conquering some calamities, and enduring others, teach us what we may hope, and what we can perform. Vice, for vice is necessary to be shown, should always disgust; nor should the graces of gaiety, or the dignity of courage, be so united with it, as to reconcile it to the mind. Wherever it appears, it should raise hatred by the malignity of its practices, and contempt by the meanness of its stratagems: for while it is supported by either parts or spirit, it will be seldom heartily abhorred. The Roman tyrant was content to be hated, if he was but feared; and there are thousands of the readers of romances willing to be thought wicked, if they may be allowed to be wits. It is therefore to be steadily inculcated, that virtue is the highest proof of understanding, and the only solid basis of greatness; and that vice is the natural consequence of narrow thoughts; that it begins in mistake, and ends in ignominy. 20 25

## No. 5. TUESDAY, April 3, 1750

*Et nunc omnis ager, nunc omnis parturit arbos,  
Nunc frondent silvæ, nunc formosissimus annus.*

VIRG. *Ed.* 3. 56, 7.

Now ev'ry field, now ev'ry tree is green;  
Now genial Nature's fairest face is seen.—ELPHINSTON.

EVERY man is sufficiently discontented with some circumstances of his present state, to suffer his imagination to range more or less in quest of future happiness, and to fix upon some point of time, in which, by the  
5 removal of the inconvenience which now perplexes him, or acquisition of the advantage which he at present wants, he shall find the condition of his life very much improved.

When this time, which is too often expected with  
10 great impatience, at last arrives, it generally comes without the blessing for which it was desired; but we solace ourselves with some new prospect, and press forward again with equal eagerness.

It is lucky for a man in whom this temper prevails,  
15 when he turns his hopes upon things wholly out of his own power; since he forbears then to precipitate his affairs, for the sake of the great event that is to complete his felicity, and waits for the blissful hour with less neglect of the measures necessary to be taken in  
20 the meantime.

I have long known a person of this temper, who indulged his dream of happiness with less hurt to himself than such chimerical wishes commonly produce, and adjusted his scheme with such address, that his  
25 hopes were in full bloom three parts of the year, and in the other part never wholly blasted. Many, perhaps, would be desirous of learning by what means he procured to himself such a cheap and lasting satisfaction. It was gained by a constant practice of referring the removal of all his uneasiness to the coming of the

next spring; if his health was impaired, the spring would restore it; if what he wanted was at a high price, it would fall its value in the spring.

The spring indeed did often come without any of these effects, but he was always certain that the next 5 would be more propitious; nor was ever convinced, that the present spring would fail him before the middle of summer; for he always talked of the spring as coming till it was past, and when it was once past, every one agreed with him that it was coming. 10

By long converse with this man, I am, perhaps, brought to feel immoderate pleasure in the contemplation of this delightful season; but I have the satisfaction of finding many whom it can be no shame to resemble, infected with the same enthusiasm; for there is, I be- 15 lieve, scarce any poet of eminence, who has not left some testimony of his fondness for the flowers, the zephyrs, and the warblers of the spring. Nor has the most luxuriant imagination been able to describe the serenity and happiness of the golden age, otherwise 20 than by giving a perpetual spring, as the highest reward of uncorrupted innocence.

There is, indeed, something inexpressibly pleasing in the annual renovation of the world, and the new display of the treasures of nature. The cold and darkness of 25 winter, with the naked deformity of every object on which we turn our eyes, make us rejoice at the succeeding season, as well for what we have escaped, as for what we may enjoy; and every budding flower which a warm situation brings early to our view is considered 30 by us as a messenger to notify the approach of more joyous days.

The spring affords to a mind, so free from the disturbance of cares or passions as to be vacant to calm amusements, almost every thing that our present state 35 makes us capable of enjoying. The variegated verdure of the fields and woods, the succession of grateful odors,

the voice of pleasure pouring out its notes on every side, with the gladness apparently conceived by every animal, from the growth of his food, and the clemency of the weather, throw over the whole earth an air of 5 gaiety, significantly expressed by the smile of nature.

Yet there are men to whom these scenes are able to give no delight, and who hurry away from all the varieties of rural beauty, to lose their hours and divert their thoughts by cards or assemblies, a tavern dinner 10 or the prattle of the day.

It may be laid down as a position which will seldom deceive, that when a man cannot bear his own company, there is something wrong. He must fly from himself, either because he feels a tediousness in life 15 from the equipoise of an empty mind, which, having no tendency to one motion more than another, but as it is impelled by some external power, must always have recourse to foreign objects; or he must be afraid of the intrusion of some unpleasing ideas, and perhaps 20 is struggling to escape from the remembrance of a loss, the fear of a calamity, or some other thought of greater horror.

Those whom sorrow incapacitates to enjoy the pleasures of contemplation may properly apply to such 25 diversions, provided they are innocent, as lay strong hold on the attention; and those whom fear of any future affliction chains down to misery must endeavor to obviate the danger.

My considerations shall, on this occasion, be turned on 30 such as are burdensome to themselves merely because they want subjects for reflection, and to whom the volume of nature is thrown open without affording them pleasure or instruction, because they never learned to read the characters.

35 A French author has advanced this seeming paradox, that 'very few men know how to take a walk'; and, indeed, it is true, that few know how to take a walk

with a prospect of any other pleasure, than the same company would have afforded them at home.

There are animals that borrow their color from the neighboring body, and consequently vary their hue as they happen to change their place. In like manner it ought to be the endeavor of every man to derive his reflections from the objects about him; for it is to no purpose that he alters his position, if his attention continues fixed to the same point. The mind should be kept open to the access of every new idea, and so far disengaged from the predominance of particular thoughts, as easily to accommodate itself to occasional entertainment.

A man that has formed this habit of turning every new object to his entertainment, finds in the productions of nature an inexhaustible stock of materials upon which he can employ himself, without any temptations to envy or malevolence; faults, perhaps, seldom totally avoided by those whose judgment is much exercised upon the works of art. He has always a certain prospect of discovering new reasons for adoring the sovereign Author of the universe, and probable hopes of making some discovery of benefit to others, or of profit to himself. There is no doubt but many vegetables and animals have qualities that might be of great use, to the knowledge of which there is not required much force of penetration or fatigue of study, but only frequent experiments and close attention. What is said by the chemists of their darling mercury, is, perhaps, true of every body through the whole creation, that, if a thousand lives should be spent upon it, all its properties would not be found out.

Mankind must necessarily be diversified by various tastes, since life affords and requires such multiplicity of employments, and a nation of naturalists is neither to be hoped, nor desired; but it is surely not improper to point out a fresh amusement to those who languish

in health, and repine in plenty, for want of some source of diversion that may be less easily exhausted, and to inform the multitudes of both sexes, who are burdened with every new day, that there are many shows which  
5 they have not seen.

He that enlarges his curiosity after the works of nature, demonstrably multiplies the inlets to happiness; and therefore the younger part of my readers to whom I dedicate this vernal speculation, must excuse me for  
10 calling upon them, to make use at once of the spring of the year, and the spring of life; to acquire, while their minds may be yet impressed with new images, a love of innocent pleasures, and an ardor for useful knowledge; and to remember that a blighted spring makes  
15 a barren year, and that the vernal flowers, however beautiful and gay, are only intended by nature as preparatives to autumnal fruits.

NO. 14. SATURDAY, May 5, 1750

— Nil fuit unquam  
Sic impar sibi — HOR. SAT. 1. 3. 18, 19.

Sure such a various creature ne'er was known.—FRANCIS.

AMONG the many inconsistencies which folly produces, or infirmity suffers in the human mind, there has often  
20 been observed a manifest and striking contrariety between the life of an author and his writings; and Milton, in a letter to a learned stranger, by whom he had been visited, with great reason congratulates himself upon the consciousness of being found equal to his own char-  
25 acter, and having preserved, in a private and familiar interview, that reputation which his works had procured him.

Those whom the appearance of virtue, or the evidence of genius, have tempted to a nearer knowledge of the  
30 writer in whose performances they may be found, have indeed had frequent reason to repent their curiosity; the bubble that sparkled before them has become com-

mon water at the touch; the phantom of perfection has vanished when they wished to press it to their bosom. They have lost the pleasure of imagining how far humanity may be exalted, and, perhaps, felt themselves less inclined to toil up the steep of virtue, when they observe those who seem best able to point the way loitering below, as either afraid of the labor, or doubtful of the reward.

It has been long the custom of the Oriental monarchs to hide themselves in gardens and palaces, to avoid the conversation of mankind, and to be known to their subjects only by their edicts. The same policy is no less necessary to him that writes, than to him that governs; for men would not more patiently submit to be taught, than commanded, by one known to have the same follies and weaknesses with themselves. A sudden intruder into the closet of an author would, perhaps, feel equal indignation with the officer who, having long solicited admission into the presence of Sardanapalus, saw him not consulting upon laws, inquiring into grievances, or modelling armies, but employed in feminine amusements, and directing the ladies in their work.

It is not difficult to conceive, however, that for many reasons a man writes much better than he lives. For without entering into refined speculations, it may be shown much easier to design than to perform. A man proposes his schemes of life in a state of abstraction and disengagement, exempt from the enticements of hope, the solicitations of affection, the importunities of appetite, or the depressions of fear, and is in the same state with him that teaches upon land the art of navigation, to whom the sea is always smooth, and the wind always prosperous.

The mathematicians are well acquainted with the difference between pure science, which has to do only with ideas, and the application of its laws to the use of life, in which they are constrained to submit to

the imperfection of matter and the influence of accidents. Thus, in moral discussions, it is to be remembered that many impediments obstruct our practice, which very easily give way to theory. The speculatist is only  
5 in danger of erroneous reasoning; but the man involved in life has his own passions, and those of others, to encounter, and is embarrassed with a thousand inconveniencies, which confound him with variety of impulse, and either perplex or obstruct his way. He is forced  
10 to act without deliberation, and obliged to choose before he can examine; he is surprised by sudden alterations of the state of things, and changes his measures according to superficial appearances; he is led by others, either because he is indolent, or because he is timorous;  
15 he is sometimes afraid to know what is right, and sometimes finds friends or enemies diligent to deceive him.

We are, therefore, not to wonder that most fail, amidst tumult, and snares, and danger, in the observance of those precepts, which they lay down in solitude, safety,  
20 and tranquillity, with a mind unbiassed, and with liberty unobstructed. It is the condition of our present state to see more than we can attain; the exactest vigilance and caution can never maintain a single day of unmingled innocence, much less can the utmost efforts of  
25 incorporated mind reach the summits of Cæsarean power.

It is, however, necessary for the idea of perfection to be proposed, that we may have some object to which our endeavors are to be directed; and he that is most  
30 deficient in the duties of life, makes some atonement for his faults, if he warns others against his own failings, and hinders, by the salubrity of his admonitions, the contagion of his example.

Nothing is more unjust, however common, than to  
35 charge with hypocrisy him that expresses zeal for those virtues which he neglects to practise; since he may be sincerely convinced of the advantages of conquering his



passions, without having yet obtained the victory, as a man may be confident of the advantages of a voyage, or a journey, without having courage or industry to undertake it, and may honestly recommend to others those attempts which he neglects himself. 5

The interest which the corrupt part of mankind have in hardening themselves against every motive to amendment, has disposed them to give to these contradictions, when they can be produced against the cause of virtue, that weight which they will not allow them in any 10 other case. They see men act in opposition to their interest, without supposing that they do not know it; those who give way to the sudden violence of passion, and forsake the most important pursuits for petty pleasures, are not supposed to have changed their opinions, 15 or to approve their own conduct. In moral or religious questions alone, they determine the sentiments by the actions, and charge every man with endeavoring to impose upon the world, whose writings are not confirmed by his life. They never consider that themselves neglect 20 or practise something every day inconsistently with their own settled judgment, nor discover that the conduct of the advocates for virtue can little increase, or lessen, the obligations of their dictates; argument is to be invalidated only by argument, and is in itself of the 25 same force, whether or not it convinces him by whom it is proposed.

Yet since this prejudice, however unreasonable, is always likely to have some prevalence, it is the duty of every man to take care lest he should hinder the 30 efficacy of his own instructions. When he desires to gain the belief of others, he should show that he believes himself; and when he teaches the fitness of virtue by his reasonings, he should, by his example, prove its possibility. Thus much at least may be required of him, 35 that he shall not act worse than others because he writes better, nor imagine that, by the merit of his

genius, he may claim indulgence beyond mortals of the lower classes, and be excused for want of prudence, or neglect of virtue.

Bacon, in his *History of the Winds*, after having  
5 offered something to the imagination as desirable, often proposes lower advantages in its place to the reason as attainable. The same method may be sometimes pursued in moral endeavors which this philosopher has observed in natural inquiries; having first set positive  
10 and absolute excellence before us, we may be pardoned though we sink down to humbler virtue, trying, however, to keep our point always in view, and struggling not to lose ground, though we cannot gain it.

It is recorded of Sir Matthew Hale, that he for a  
15 long time concealed the consecration of himself to the stricter duties of religion, lest by some flagitious and shameful action he should bring piety into disgrace. For the same reason it may be prudent for a writer, who apprehends that he shall not enforce his own maxims  
20 by his domestic character to conceal his name, that he may not injure them.

There are, indeed, a great number whose curiosity to gain a more familiar knowledge of successful writers is not so much prompted by an opinion of their power  
25 to improve as to delight, and who expect from them not arguments against vice, or dissertations on temperance or justice, but flights of wit and sallies of pleasantry, or, at least, acute remarks, nice distinctions, justness of sentiment, and elegance of  
30 diction.

This expectation is, indeed, specious and probable, and yet, such is the fate of all human hopes, that it is very often frustrated, and those who raise admiration by their books, disgust by their company. A man of  
35 letters for the most part spends in the privacies of study that season of life in which the manners are to be softened into ease, and polished into elegance; and,

when he has gained knowledge enough to be respected, has neglected the minuter acts by which he might have pleased. When he enters life, if his temper be soft and timorous, he is diffident and bashful, from the knowledge of his defects; or if he was born with spirit 5 and resolution, he is ferocious and arrogant from the consciousness of his merit: he is either dissipated by the awe of company, and unable to recollect his reading and arrange his arguments; or he is hot and dogmatical, quick in opposition and tenacious in defense, disabled 10 by his own violence, and confused by his haste to triumph.

The graces of writing and conversation are of different kinds, and though he who excels in one might have been, with opportunities and application, equally suc- 15 cessful in the other, yet as many please by extemporary talk, though utterly unacquainted with the more accurate method and more labored beauties which composition requires; so it is very possible that men wholly accustomed to works of study may be without that readi- 20 ness of conception and affluence of language always necessary to colloquial entertainment. They may want address to watch the hints which conversation offers for the display of their particular attainments, or they may be so much unfurnished with matter on common sub- 25 jects that discourse not professedly literary glides over them as heterogeneous bodies, without admitting their conceptions to mix in the circulation.

A transition from an author's book to his conversation is too often like an entrance into a large city 30 after a distant prospect. Remotely, we see nothing but spires of temples and turrets of palaces, and imagine it the residence of splendor, grandeur, and magnificence; but, when we have passed the gates, we find it perplexed with narrow passages, disgraced with despicable 35 cottages, embarrassed with obstructions, and clouded with smoke.

No. 16. SATURDAY, May 12, 1750

——— *Multis dicendi copia torrens,  
Et sua mortifera est facundia*—JUV. 10. 9.

Some who the depths of eloquence have found,  
In that unnavigable stream were drown'd.—DRYDEN.

SIR:

I AM the modest young man whom you favored with your advice in a late paper; and, as I am very far from suspecting that you foresaw the numberless inconveniencies which I have, by following it, brought upon myself, I will lay my condition open before you, for you seem bound to extricate me from the perplexities in which your counsel, however innocent in the intention, has contributed to involve me.

10 You told me, as you thought, to my comfort, that a writer might easily find means of introducing his genius to the world, for the 'presses of England were open.' This I have now fatally experienced; the press is, indeed, open.

15 ——— *Facilis descensus Averni,  
Noctes atque dies patet atri janua Ditis*.—VIRG.

The gates of hell are open night and day;  
Smooth the descent, and easy is the way.—DRYDEN.

The means of doing hurt to ourselves are always at hand. I immediately sent to a printer, and contracted with him for an impression of several thousands of my pamphlet. While it was at the press, I was seldom absent from the printing-house, and continually urged the workmen to haste, by solicitations, promises, and rewards. From the day all other pleasures were excluded by the delightful employment of correcting the sheets; 20 and from the night sleep generally was banished by anticipations of the happiness which every hour was bringing nearer.

At last the time of publication approached, and my heart beat with the raptures of an author. I was above all little precautions, and, in defiance of envy or of criticism, set my name upon the title, without sufficiently considering, that what has once passed the press 5 is irrevocable, and that though the printing-house may properly be compared to the infernal regions for the facility of its entrance, and the difficulty with which authors return from it, yet there is this difference, that a great genius can never return to his former state, by 10 a happy draught of the waters of oblivion.

I am now, Mr. Rambler, known to be an author, and am condemned, irreversibly condemned, to all the miseries of high reputation. The first morning after publication my friends assembled about me; I presented 15 each, as is usual, with a copy of my book. They looked into the first pages, but were hindered by their admiration from reading further. The first pages are, indeed, very elaborate. Some passages they particularly dwelt upon, as more eminently beautiful than the rest; and 20 some delicate strokes, and secret elegancies, I pointed out to them, which had escaped their observation. I then begged of them to forbear their compliments, and invited them (I could do no less) to dine with me at a tavern. After dinner the book was resumed; but 25 their praises very often so much overpowered my modesty, that I was forced to put about the glass, and had often no means of repressing the clamors of their admiration, but by thundering to the drawer for another bottle. 30

Next morning another set of my acquaintance congratulated me upon my performance, with such importunity of praise, that I was again forced to obviate their civilities by a treat. On the third day, I had yet a greater number of applauders to put to silence in the 35 same manner; and, on the fourth, those whom I had entertained the first day came again, having, in the

perusal of the remaining part of the book, discovered so many forcible sentences and masterly touches, that it was impossible for me to bear the repetition of their commendations. I therefore persuaded them once more  
5 to adjourn to the tavern, and choose some other subject on which I might share in their conversation. But it was not in their power to withhold their attention from my performance, which had so entirely taken possession of their minds, that no entreaties of mine could change  
10 their topic, and I was obliged to stifle, with claret, that praise which neither my modesty could hinder, nor my uneasiness repress.

The whole week was thus spent in a kind of literary revel, and I have now found that nothing is so expensive  
15 as great abilities, unless there is joined with them an insatiable eagerness of praise; for to escape from the pain of hearing myself exalted above the greatest names, dead and living, of the learned world,\* it has already cost me two hogsheads of port, fifteen gallons of arrack,  
20 ten dozen of claret, and five and forty bottles of champagne.

I was resolved to stay at home no longer, and therefore rose early and went to the coffee-house; but found that I had now made myself too eminent for happiness,  
25 and that I was no longer to enjoy the pleasure of mixing, upon equal terms, with the rest of the world. As soon as I enter the room, I see part of the company raging with envy, which they endeavor to conceal, sometimes with the appearance of laughter, and sometimes  
30 with that of contempt; but the disguise is such that I can discover the secret rancor of their hearts, and as envy is deservedly its own punishment, I frequently indulge myself in tormenting them with my presence.

But though there may be some slight satisfaction  
35 received from the mortification of my enemies, yet my benevolence will not suffer me to take any pleasure in the terrors of my friends. I have been cautious, since

the appearance of my work, not to give myself more premeditated airs of superiority than the most rigid humility might allow. It is, indeed, not impossible that I may sometimes have laid down my opinion in a manner that showed a consciousness of my ability to maintain it, or interrupted the conversation, when I saw its tendency, without suffering the speaker to waste his time in explaining his sentiments; and, indeed, I did indulge myself for two days in a custom of drumming with my fingers, when the company began to lose themselves in absurdities, or to encroach upon subjects which I knew them unqualified to discuss. But I generally acted with great appearance of respect, even to those whose stupidity I pitied in my heart. Yet, notwithstanding this exemplary moderation, so universal is the dread of uncommon powers, and such the unwillingness of mankind to be made wiser, that I have now for some days found myself shunned by all my acquaintance. If I knock at a door, nobody is at home; if I enter a coffee-house, I have the box to myself. I 20 live in the town like a lion in his desert, or an eagle on his rock, too great for friendship or society, and condemned to solitude by unhappy elevation and dreaded ascendency.

Nor is my character only formidable to others, but 25 burdensome to myself. I naturally love to talk without much thinking, to scatter my merriment at random, and to relax my thoughts with ludicrous remarks and fanciful images; but such is now the importance of my opinion, that I am afraid to offer it, lest, by being 30 established too hastily into a maxim, it should be the occasion of error to half the nation; and such is the expectation with which I am attended, when I am going to speak, that I frequently pause to reflect whether what I am about to utter is worthy of myself. 35

This, Sir, is sufficiently miserable; but there are still greater calamities behind. You must have read in Pope

and Swift how men of parts have had their closets rifled, and their cabinets broke open at the instigation of piratical booksellers, for the profit of their works; and it is apparent that there are many prints now sold  
5 in the shops of men whom you cannot suspect of sitting for that purpose, and whose likenesses must have been certainly stolen when their names made their faces vendible. These considerations at first put me on my guard, and I have, indeed, found sufficient reason for  
10 my caution, for I have discovered many people examining my countenance with a curiosity that showed their intention to draw it; I immediately left the house, but find the same behavior in another.

Others may be persecuted, but I am haunted; I have  
15 good reason to believe that eleven painters are now dogging me, for they know that he who can get my face first will make his fortune. I often change my wig, and wear my hat over my eyes, by which I hope somewhat to confound them; for you know it is not fair  
20 to sell my face without admitting me to share the profit.

I am, however, not so much in pain for my face as for my papers, which I dare neither carry with me nor leave behind. I have, indeed, taken some measures  
25 for their preservation, having put them in an iron chest, and fixed a padlock upon my closet. I change my lodgings five times a week, and always remove at the dead of night.

Thus I live, in consequence of having given too great  
30 proofs of a predominant genius, in the solitude of a hermit, with the anxiety of a miser, and the caution of an outlaw; afraid to show my face lest it should be copied; afraid to speak, lest I should injure my character; and to write, lest my correspondents should publish  
35 my letters; always uneasy, lest my servants should steal my papers for the sake of money, or my friends for that of the public. This it is to soar above the rest of



mankind; and this representation I lay before you, that I may be informed how to divest myself of the laurels which are so cumbersome to the wearer, and descend to the enjoyment of that quiet from which I find a writer of the first class so fatally debarred. 5

MISELLUS.

No. 50. SATURDAY, September 8, 1750

*Credebant quo grande nefas, et morte plandum,  
Si juvenis vetulo non assurrexerat, et si  
Barbato cuicumque puer, licet ipse videret  
Plura domi fraga, et majores glandis acervos.*

—JUV. 13. 54-7

And had not men the hoary head rever'd,  
And boys paid rev'rence when a man appear'd,  
Both must have died, though richer skins they wore,  
And saw more heaps of acorns in their store.

—CREECH.

I HAVE always thought it the business of those who turn their speculations upon the living world, to commend the virtues, as well as to expose the faults of their contemporaries, and to confute a false as well as 10 to support a just accusation; not only because it is peculiarly the business of a monitor to keep his own reputation untainted, lest those who can once charge him with partiality, should indulge themselves afterwards in disbelieving him at pleasure; but because he 15 may find real crimes sufficient to give full employment to caution or repentance, without distracting the mind by needless scruples and vain solitudes.

There are certain fixed and stated reproaches that one part of mankind has in all ages thrown upon an- 20 other, which are regularly transmitted through continued successions, and which he that has once suffered them is certain to use with the same undistinguishing vehemence, when he has changed his station, and gained the prescriptive right of inflicting on others what he had 25 formerly endured himself.

To these hereditary imputations, of which no man sees the justice, till it becomes his interest to see it, very little regard is to be shown; since it does not appear that they are produced by ratiocination or inquiry, but received implicitly, or caught by a kind of instantaneous contagion, and supported rather by willingness to credit, than ability to prove them.

It has been always the practice of those who are desirous to believe themselves made venerable by length of time, to censure the new comers into life for want of respect to grey hairs and sage experience, for heady confidence in their own understandings, for hasty conclusions upon partial views, for disregard of counsels, which their fathers and grandsires are ready to afford them, and a rebellious impatience of that subordination to which youth is condemned by nature, as necessary to its security from evils into which it would be otherwise precipitated by the rashness of passion, and the blindness of ignorance.

Every old man complains of the growing depravity of the world, of the petulance and insolence of the rising generation. He recounts the decency and regularity of former times, and celebrates the discipline and sobriety of the age in which his youth was passed; a happy age, which is now no more to be expected, since confusion has broken in upon the world, and thrown down all the boundaries of civility and reverence.

It is not sufficiently considered how much he assumes who dares to claim the privilege of complaining; for as every man has, in his own opinion, a full share of the miseries of life, he is inclined to consider all clamorous uneasiness as a proof of impatience rather than of affliction, and to ask, 'What merit has this man to show, by which he has acquired a right to repine at the distributions of nature? Or, why does he imagine that exemptions should be granted him from the general condition of man?' We find ourselves excited rather

to captiousness than pity, and instead of being in haste to soothe his complaints by sympathy and tenderness, we inquire whether the pain be proportionate to the lamentation; and whether, supposing the affliction real, it is not the effect of vice and folly, rather than a calamity.

The querulousness and indignation which is observed so often to disfigure the last scene of life, naturally leads us to inquiries like these. For surely it will be thought at the first view of things, that if age be thus contemned 10 and ridiculed, insulted and neglected, the crime must at least be equal on either part. They who have had opportunities of establishing their authority over minds ductile and unresisting, they who have been the protectors of helplessness, and the instructors of ignorance, 15 and who yet retain in their own hands the power of wealth, and the dignity of command, must defeat their influence by their own misconduct, and make use of all these advantages with very little skill, if they cannot secure to themselves an appearance 20 of respect, and ward off open mockery and declared contempt.

The general story of mankind will evince, that lawful and settled authority is very seldom resisted when it is well employed. Gross corruption, or evident imbecility, is necessary to the suppression of that reverence with which the majority of mankind look upon their governors, and on those whom they see surrounded by splendor, and fortified by power. For though men are drawn by their passions into forgetfulness of invisible 30 rewards and punishments, yet they are easily kept obedient to those who have temporal dominion in their hands, till their veneration is dissipated by such wickedness and folly as can neither be defended nor concealed. 35

It may, therefore, very reasonably be suspected that the old draw upon themselves the greatest part of those

insults which they so much lament, and that age is rarely despised but when it is contemptible. If men imagine that excess of debauchery can be made reverend by time, that knowledge is the consequence of long life, however idly or thoughtlessly employed, that priority of birth will supply the want of steadiness or honesty, can it raise much wonder that their hopes are disappointed, and that they see their posterity rather willing to trust their own eyes in their progress into life, than enlist themselves under guides who have lost their way?

There are, indeed, many truths which time necessarily and certainly teaches, and which might, by those who have learned them from experience, be communicated to their successors at a cheaper rate: but dictates, though liberally enough bestowed, are generally without effect, the teacher gains few proselytes by instruction which his own behavior contradicts; and young men miss the benefit of counsel, because they are not very ready to believe that those who fall below them in practice, can much excel them in theory. Thus the progress of knowledge is retarded, the world is kept long in the same state, and every new race is to gain the prudence of their predecessors by committing and redressing the same miscarriages.

To secure to the old that influence which they are willing to claim, and which might so much contribute to the improvement of the arts of life, it is absolutely necessary that they give themselves up to the duties of declining years; and contentedly resign to youth its levity, its pleasures, its frolics, and its fopperies. It is a hopeless endeavor to unite the contrarieties of spring and winter; it is unjust to claim the privileges of age, and retain the playthings of childhood. The young always form magnificent ideas of the wisdom and gravity of men whom they consider as placed at a distance from them in the ranks of existence, and naturally look

on those whom they find trifling with long beards, with contempt and indignation, like that which women feel at the effeminacy of men. If dotards will contend with boys in those performances in which boys must always excel them; if they will dress crippled limbs in em- 5 broidery, endeavor at gaiety with faltering voices, and darken assemblies of pleasure with the ghastliness of disease, they may well expect those who find their diversions obstructed will hoot them away; and that if they descend to competition with youth, they must bear the 10 insolence of successful rivals.

*Lusisti satis, edisti satis atque bibisti:  
Tempus abire tibi est.*

You've had your share of mirth, of meat and drink;  
'Tis time to quit the scene—'tis time to think.  
—ELPHINSTON.

Another vice of age by which the rising generation may be alienated from it is severity and censoriousness, 15 that gives no allowance to the failings of early life, that expects artfulness from childhood and constancy from youth, that is peremptory in every command and inexorable to every failure. There are many who live merely to hinder happiness, and whose descendants can 20 only tell of long life, that it produces suspicion, malignity, peevishness, and persecution; and yet even these tyrants can talk of the ingratitude of the age, curse their heirs for impatience, and wonder that young men cannot take pleasure in their father's company. 25

He that would pass the latter part of life with honor and decency, must, when he is young, consider that he shall one day be old; and remember, when he is old, that he has once been young. In youth he must lay up knowledge for his support, when his powers of act- 30 ing shall forsake him; and in age forbear to animadvert with rigor on faults which experience only can correct.

No. 60. SATURDAY, October 13, 1750

—*Quid sit pulchrum, quid turpe, quid utile, quid non,  
Planius et melius Chrysippo et Crantore dicit.*

—HOR. Ep. 1. 2. 4.

Whose works the beautiful and base contain,  
Of vice and virtue more instructive rules  
Than all the sober sages of the schools.—FRANCIS.

ALL joy or sorrow for the happiness or calamities of others is produced by an act of the imagination that realizes the event however fictitious, or approximates it however remote, by placing us, for a time, in the condition of him whose fortune we contemplate; so that we feel, while the deception lasts, whatever motions would be excited by the same good or evil happening to ourselves.

Our passions are therefore more strongly moved, in proportion as we can more readily adopt the pains or pleasure proposed to our minds, by recognizing them as once our own, or considering them as naturally incident to our state of life. It is not easy for the most artful writer to give us an interest in happiness or misery which we think ourselves never likely to feel, and with which we have never yet been made acquainted. Histories of the downfall of kingdoms, and revolutions of empires, are read with great tranquillity; the imperial tragedy pleases common auditors only by its pomp of ornament, and grandeur of ideas; and the man whose faculties have been engrossed by business, and whose heart never fluttered but at the rise or fall of the stocks, wonders how the attention can be seized, or the affection agitated, by a tale of love.

Those parallel circumstances and kindred images to which we readily conform our minds are, above all other writings, to be found in narratives of the lives of particular persons; and therefore no species of writing

seems more worthy of cultivation than biography, since none can be more delightful or more useful, none can more certainly enchain the heart by irresistible interest, or more widely diffuse instruction to every diversity of condition.

5

The general and rapid narratives of history, which involve a thousand fortunes in the business of a day, and complicate innumerable incidents in one great transaction, afford few lessons applicable to private life, which derives its comforts and its wretchedness from 10 the right or wrong management of things, which nothing but their frequency makes considerable—‘*Parva si non fiant quotidie*,’ says Pliny—and which can have no place in those relations which never descend below the consultation of senates, the motions of armies, and the 15 schemes of conspirators.

I have often thought that there has rarely passed a life of which a judicious and faithful narrative would not be useful. For, not only every man has, in the mighty mass of the world, great numbers in the same 20 condition with himself, to whom his mistakes and mis-carriages, escapes and expedients, would be of immediate and apparent use; but there is such an uniformity in the state of man, considered apart from adventitious and separable decorations and disguises, that there is scarce 25 any possibility of good or ill, but is common to human kind. A great part of the time of those who are placed at the greatest distance by fortune, or by temper, must unavoidably pass in the same manner; and though, when the claims of nature are satisfied, caprice, and vanity, 30 and accident, begin to produce discriminations and peculiarities, yet the eye is not very heedful or quick which cannot discover the same causes still terminating their influence in the same effects, though sometimes accelerated, sometimes retarded, or perplexed by multi- 35 plied combinations. We are all prompted by the same motives, all deceived by the same fallacies, all animated

by hope, obstructed by danger, entangled by desire, and seduced by pleasure.

It is frequently objected to relations of particular lives, that they are not distinguished by any striking or  
5 wonderful vicissitudes. The scholar who passed his life among his books, the merchant who conducted only his own affairs, the priest whose sphere of action was not extended beyond that of his duty, are considered as no proper objects of public regard, however they might  
10 have excelled in their several stations, whatever might have been their learning, integrity, and piety. But this notion arises from false measures of excellence and dignity, and must be eradicated by considering that, in the esteem of uncorrupted reason, what is of most  
15 use is of most value.

It is, indeed, not improper to take honest advantages of prejudice, and to gain attention by a celebrated name; but the business of the biographer is often to pass slightly over those performances and incidents  
20 which produce vulgar greatness, to lead the thoughts into domestic privacies, and display the minute details of daily life, where exterior appendages are cast aside, and men excell each other only by prudence and by virtue. The account of Thuanus is, with great pro-  
25 priety, said by its author to have been written that it might lay open to posterity the private and familiar character of that man, '*cujus ingenium et candorem ex ipsius scriptis sunt olim semper miraturi*'—'whose candor and genius will to the end of time be by his writings  
30 preserved in admiration.'

There are many invisible circumstances which, whether we read as inquirers after natural or moral knowledge, whether we intend to enlarge our science, or increase our virtue, are more important than public occurrences.  
35 Thus Sallust, the great master of nature, has not forgot, in his account of Catiline, to remark that 'his walk was now quick, and again slow,' as an indication of



a mind revolving something with violent commotion. Thus the story of Melancthon affords a striking lecture on the value of time, by informing us that, when he made an appointment, he expected not only the hour, but the minute to be fixed, that the day might not run out in the idleness of suspense; and all the plans and enterprizes of De Witt are now of less importance to the world, than that part of his personal character which represents him as 'careful of his health, and negligent of his life.'

10

But biography has often been allotted to writers who seem very little acquainted with the nature of their task, or very negligent about the performance. They rarely afford any other account than might be collected from public papers, but imagine themselves writing a life when they exhibit a chronological series of actions or preferments; and so little regard the manners or behavior of their heroes, that more knowledge may be gained of a man's real character, by a short conversation with one of his servants, than from a formal and studied narrative, begun with his pedigree, and ended with his funeral.

If now and then they condescend to inform the world of particular facts, they are not always so happy as to select the most important. I know not well what advantage posterity can receive from the only circumstance by which Tickell has distinguished Addison from the rest of mankind, 'the irregularity of his pulse'; nor can I think myself overpaid for the time spent in reading the life of Malherb by being enabled to relate after the learned biographer, that Malherb had two predominant opinions: one, that the looseness of a single woman might destroy all her boast of ancient descent; the other, that the French beggars made use very improperly and barbarously of the phrase 'noble gentleman,' because either word included the sense of both.

35

There are, indeed, some natural reasons why these narratives are often written by such as were not likely to give much instruction or delight, and why most accounts of particular persons are barren and useless. 5 If a life be delayed till interest and envy are at an end, we may hope for impartiality, but must expect little intelligence; for the incidents which give excellence to biography are of a volatile and evanescent kind, such as soon escape the memory, and are rarely trans- 10 mitted by tradition. We know how few can portray a living acquaintance, except by his most prominent and observable particularities, and the grosser features of his mind; and it may be easily imagined how much of this little knowledge may be lost in imparting it, 15 and how soon a succession of copies will lose all resemblance of the original.

If the biographer writes from personal knowledge, and makes haste to gratify the public curiosity, there is danger lest his interest, his fear, his gratitude, or 20 his tenderness, overpower his fidelity, and tempt him to conceal, if not to invent. There are many who think it an act of piety to hide the faults or failings of their friends, even when they can no longer suffer by their detection; we therefore see whole ranks of characters 25 adorned with uniform panegyric, and not to be known from one another, but by extrinsic and casual circumstances. 'Let me remember,' says Hale, 'when I find myself inclined to pity a criminal, that there is likewise a pity due to the country.' If we owe regard to 30 the memory of the dead, there is yet more respect to be paid to knowledge, to virtue, and to truth.

No. 72. SATURDAY, *November 24, 1750*

*Omnis Aristippum decuit color, et status, et res,  
Temptantem majora, fere præsentibus æquum.*

—HOR. *Ep. 1* 17. 23.

Yet Aristippus ev'ry dress became,  
In ev'ry various change of life the same;  
And though he aim'd at things of higher kind,  
Yet to the present held an equal mind.—FRANCIS.

#### TO THE RAMBLER

SIR:

THOSE who exalt themselves into the chair of instruction, without inquiring whether any will submit to their authority, have not sufficiently considered how much of human life passes in little incidents, cursory conversa- 5  
tion, slight business, and casual amusements; and therefore they have endeavored only to inculcate the more awful virtues, without condescending to regard those petty qualities, which grow important only by their frequency, and which, though they produce no single 10  
acts of heroism, nor astonish us by great events, yet are every moment exerting their influence upon us, and make the draught of life sweet or bitter by imperceptible instillations. They operate unseen and unregarded, as change of air makes us sick or healthy, though we 15  
breathe it without attention, and only know the particles that impregnate it by their salutary or malignant effects.

You have shown yourself not ignorant of the value of those subaltern endowments, yet have hitherto neglected to recommend good humor to the world, though 20  
a little reflection will show you that it is the 'balm of being,' the quality to which all that adorns or elevates mankind must owe its power of pleasing. Without good humor, learning and bravery can only confer that superiority which swells the heart of the lion in the desert, 25  
where he roars without reply, and ravages without re-

sistance. Without good humor virtue may awe by its dignity, and amaze by its brightness; but must always be viewed at a distance, and will scarcely gain a friend or attract an imitator.

5 Good humor may be defined a habit of being pleased; a constant and perennial softness of manner, easiness of approach, and suavity of disposition; like that which every man perceives in himself, when the first transports of new felicity have subsided, and his thoughts are only  
10 kept in motion by a slow succession of soft impulses. Good humor is a state between gaiety and unconcern; the act or emanation of a mind at leisure to regard the gratification of another.

It is imagined by many, that whenever they aspire to  
15 please, they are required to be merry, and to show the gladness of their souls by flights of pleasantry, and bursts of laughter. But though these men may be for a time heard with applause and admiration, they seldom delight us long. We enjoy them a little,  
20 and then retire to easiness and good humor, as the eye gazes awhile on eminences glittering with the sun, but soon turns aching away to verdure and to flowers.

Gaiety is to good humor as animal perfumes to vegetable fragrance; the one overpowers weak spirits, and  
25 the other recreates and revives them. Gaiety seldom fails to give some pain; the hearers either strain their faculties to accompany its towerings, or are left behind in envy and despair. Good humor boasts no faculties which every one does not believe in his own power,  
30 and pleases principally by not offending.

It is well known that the most certain way to give any man pleasure is to persuade him that you receive pleasure from him, to encourage him to freedom and confidence, and to avoid any such appearance of superiority as may overbear and depress him. We see  
35 many that, by this art only, spend their days in the midst of caresses, invitations, and civilities; and without any

extraordinary qualities or attainments, are the universal favorites of both sexes, and certainly find a friend in every place. The darlings of the world will, indeed, be generally found such as excite neither jealousy nor fear, and are not considered as candidates for any 5 eminent degree of reputation, but content themselves with common accomplishments, and endeavor rather to solicit kindness than to raise esteem; therefore in assemblies and places of resort it seldom fails to happen, that though at the entrance of some particular person 10 every face brightens with gladness, and every hand is extended in salutation, yet if you pursue him beyond the first exchange of civilities, you will find him of very small importance, and only welcome to the company as one by whom all conceive themselves admired, and 15 with whom any one is at liberty to amuse himself when he can find no other auditor or companion; as one with whom all are at ease, who will hear a jest without criticism, and a narrative without contradiction, who laughs with every wit, and yields to every disputer. 20

There are many whose vanity always inclines them to associate with those from whom they have no reason to fear mortification; and there are times in which the wise and the knowing are willing to receive praise without the labor of deserving it, in which the most elevated 25 mind is willing to descend, and the most active to be at rest. All therefore are at some hour or another fond of companions whom they can entertain upon easy terms, and who will relieve them from solitude, without condemning them to vigilance and caution. We are 30 most inclined to love when we have nothing to fear, and he that encourages us to please ourselves, will not be long without preference in our affection to those whose learning holds us at the distance of pupils, or whose wit calls all attention from us, and leaves us 35 without importance and without regard.

It is remarked by Prince Henry, when he sees Fal-

staff lying on the ground, that 'he could have better spared a better man.' He was well acquainted with the vices and follies of him whom he lamented, but while his conviction compelled him to do justice to superior qualities, his tenderness still broke out at the remembrance of Falstaff, of the cheerful companion, the loud buffoon, with whom he had passed his time in all the luxury of idleness, who had gladdened him with unenvied merriment, and whom he could at once enjoy  
10 and despise.

You may perhaps think this account of those who are distinguished for their good humor, not very consistent with the praises which I have bestowed upon it. But surely nothing can more evidently show the value  
15 of this quality, than that it recommends those who are destitute of all other excellencies, and procures regard to the trifling, friendship to the worthless, and affection to the dull.

Good humor is indeed generally degraded by the characters in which it is found; for, being considered as a cheap and vulgar quality, we find it often neglected by those that, having excellencies of higher reputation and brighter splendor, perhaps imagine that they have some right to gratify themselves at the expense of others,  
25 and are to demand compliance, rather than to practise it. It is by some unfortunate mistake that almost all those who have any claim to esteem or love, press their pretensions with too little consideration of others. This mistake my own interest, as well as my zeal for general  
30 happiness, makes me desirous to rectify; for I have a friend who, because he knows his own fidelity and usefulness, is never willing to sink into a companion; I have a wife whose beauty first subdued me, and whose wit confirmed her conquest, but whose beauty now serves  
35 no other purpose than to entitle her to tyranny, and whose wit is only used to justify perverseness.

Surely nothing can be more unreasonable than to

lose the will to please, when we are conscious of the power, or show more cruelty, than to choose any kind of influence before that of kindness. He that regards the welfare of others should make his virtue approachable, that it may be loved and copied; and he that considers the wants which every man feels, or will feel, of external assistance, must rather wish to be surrounded by those that love him, than by those that admire his excellencies, or solicit his favors; for admiration ceases with novelty, and interest gains its end and retires. A 10 man whose great qualities want the ornament of superficial attractions, is like a naked mountain with mines of gold, which will be frequented only till the treasure is exhausted.

I am, &c.

PHILOMIDES. 15

No. 93. TUESDAY, February 5, 1751

— *Expertar quid concedatur in illos,  
Quorum flaminia tegitur cinis atque Latina,*

—JUV. 1. 170, 1.

More safely truth to urge her claim presumes,  
On names now found alone on books and tombs.

THERE are few books on which more time is spent by young students, than on treatises which deliver the characters of authors; nor any which oftener deceive the expectation of the reader, or fill his mind with more opinions which the progress of his studies and the increase of his knowledge oblige him to resign. 20

Baillet has introduced his collection of the decisions of the learned, by an enumeration of the prejudices which mislead the critic, and raise the passions in rebellion against the judgment. His catalogue, though 25 large, is imperfect; and who can hope to complete it? The beauties of writing have been observed to be often such as cannot in the present state of human knowledge be evinced by evidence, or drawn out into demonstra-

tions; they are therefore wholly subject to the imagination, and do not force their effects upon a mind pre-occupied by unfavorable sentiments, nor overcome the counteraction of a false principle or of stubborn partiality.

To convince any man against his will is hard, but to please him against his will is justly pronounced by Dryden to be above the reach of human abilities. Interest and passion will hold out long against the closest  
 10 siege of diagrams and syllogisms, but they are absolutely impregnable to imagery and sentiment; and will for ever bid defiance to the most powerful strains of Virgil or Homer, though they may give way in time to the batteries of Euclid or Archimedes.

15 In trusting therefore to the sentence of a critic, we are in danger not only from that vanity which exalts writers too often to the dignity of teaching what they are yet to learn, from that negligence which sometimes steals upon the most vigilant caution, and that falli-  
 20 bility to which the condition of nature has subjected every human understanding; but from a thousand extrinsic and accidental causes, from every thing which can excite kindness, or malevolence, veneration or contempt.

25 Many of those who have determined with great boldness upon the various degrees of literary merit, may be justly suspected of having passed sentence, as Seneca remarks of Claudius,

30 *Unâ tantum parte, auditâ,  
 Sæpe et nullâ,*

without much knowledge of the cause before them: for it will not easily be imagined of Langbaine, Borrichius, or Rapin, that they had very accurately perused all the books which they praise or censure; or that, even if  
 35 nature and learning had qualified them for judges, they could read for ever with the attention necessary to just



criticism. Such performances, however, are not wholly without their use; for they are commonly just echoes to the voice of fame, and transmit the general suffrage of mankind when they have no particular motives to suppress it.

5

Critics, like the rest of mankind, are very frequently misled by interest. The bigotry with which editors regard the authors whom they illustrate or correct, has been generally remarked. Dryden was known to have written most of his critical dissertations only to recom- 10 mend the work upon which he then happened to be employed; and Addison is suspected to have denied the expediency of poetical justice, because his own Cato was condemned to perish in a good cause.

There are prejudices which authors, not otherwise 15 weak or corrupt, have indulged without scruple; and perhaps some of them are so complicated with our natural affections, that they cannot easily be disentangled from the heart. Scarce any can hear with impartiality a comparison between the writers of his own 20 and another country; and though it cannot, I think, be charged equally on all nations, that they are blinded with this literary patriotism, yet there are none that do not look upon their authors with the fondness of affinity, and esteem them as well for the place of their 25 birth, as for their knowledge or their wit. There is, therefore, seldom much respect due to comparative criticism, when the competitors are of different countries, unless the judge is of a nation equally indifferent to both. The Italians could not for a long time believe 30 that there was any learning beyond the mountains; and the French seem generally persuaded that there are no wits or reasoners equal to their own. I can scarcely conceive that, if Scaliger had not considered himself as allied to Virgil, by being born in the same 35 country, he would have found his works so much superior to those of Homer, or have thought the con-

troversy worthy of so much zeal, vehemence, and acrimony.

There is, indeed, one prejudice, and only one, by which it may be doubted whether it is any dishonor to be sometimes misguided. Criticism has so often given occasion to the envious and ill-natured of gratifying their malignity, that some have thought it necessary to recommend the virtue of candor without restriction, and to preclude all future liberty of censure. Writers possessed with this opinion are continually enforcing civility and decency, recommending to critics the proper diffidence of themselves, and inculcating the veneration due to celebrated names.

I am not of opinion that these professed enemies of arrogance and severity have much more benevolence or modesty than the rest of mankind; or that they feel in their own hearts any other intention than to distinguish themselves by their softness and delicacy. Some are modest because they are timorous, and some are lavish of praise because they hope to be repaid.

There is indeed some tenderness due to living writers, when they attack none of those truths which are of importance to the happiness of mankind, and have committed no other offense than that of betraying their own ignorance or dullness. I should think it cruelty to crush an insect who had provoked me only by buzzing in my ear; and would not willingly interrupt the dream of harmless stupidity, or destroy the jest which makes its author laugh. Yet I am far from thinking this tenderness universally necessary; for he that writes may be considered as a kind of general challenger, whom every one has a right to attack; since he quits the common rank of life, steps forward beyond the lists, and offers his merit to the public judgment. To commence author is to claim praise, and no man can justly aspire to honor, but at the hazard of disgrace.

But whatever be decided concerning contemporaries—

whom he that knows the treachery of the human heart, and considers how often we gratify our own pride or envy under the appearance of contending for elegance and propriety, will find himself not much inclined to disturb—there can surely be no exemptions pleaded to 5 secure them from criticism who can no longer suffer by reproach, and of whom nothing now remains but their writings and their names. Upon these authors the critic is undoubtedly at full liberty to exercise the strictest severity, since he endangers only his own fame, 10 and, like *Æneas* when he drew his sword in the infernal regions, encounters phantoms which cannot be wounded. He may indeed pay some regard to established reputation; but he can by that show of reverence consult only his own security, for all other motives are 15 now at an end.

The faults of a writer of acknowledged excellence are more dangerous, because the influence of his example is more extensive; and the interest of learning requires that they should be discovered and stigmatized, before 20 they have the sanction of antiquity conferred upon them, and become precedents of indisputable authority.

It has, indeed, been advanced by Addison, as one of the characteristics of a true critic, that he points out beauties rather than faults. But it is rather natural 25 to a man of learning and genius to apply himself chiefly to the study of writers who have more beauties than faults to be displayed: for the duty of criticism is neither to depreciate, nor dignify by partial representations, but to hold out the light of reason, what- 30 ever it may discover; and to promulgate the determinations of truth, whatever she shall dictate.

No. 102. SATURDAY, March 9, 1751

*Ipsa quoque assiduo labuntur tempora motu,  
Non secus ac flumen: neque enim consistere flumen,  
Nec levis hora potest; sed ut unda impellitur undâ,  
Urgeturque prior veniente, urgetque priorem,  
Tempora sic fugiunt pariter, pariterque sequuntur.*

—OVID, *Met.* 15. 179-83.

With constant motion as the moments glide,  
Behold in running life the rolling tide!  
For none can stem by art, or stop by pow'r,  
The flowing ocean, or the fleeting hour:  
But wave by wave pursued arrives on shore,  
And each impell'd behind impels before:  
So time on time revolving we descry;  
So minutes follow, and so minutes fly.—ELPHINSTON.

'LIFE,' says Seneca, 'is a voyage, in the progress of which we are perpetually changing our scenes; we first leave childhood behind us, then youth, then the years of ripened manhood, then the better and more pleasing part of old age.' The perusal of this passage having incited in me a train of reflections on the state of man, the incessant fluctuation of his wishes, the gradual change of his disposition to all external objects, and the thoughtlessness with which he floats along the stream of time, I sunk into a slumber amidst my meditations, and on a sudden found my ears filled with the tumult of labor, the shouts of alacrity, the shrieks of alarm, the whistle of winds, and the dash of waters.

My astonishment for a time repressed my curiosity; but soon recovering myself so far as to inquire whither we were going, and what was the cause of such clamor and confusion, I was told that we were launching out into the 'ocean of life'; that we had already passed the straits of infancy, in which multitudes had perished, some by the weakness and fragility of their vessels, and more by the folly, perverseness, or negligence of those who undertook to steer them; and that we were now on the main sea, abandoned to the winds and billows, without any other means of security than the care

of the pilot, whom it was always in our power to choose among great numbers that offered their direction and assistance.

I then looked round with anxious eagerness; and first turning my eyes behind me, saw a stream flowing 5 through flowery islands, which every one that sailed along seemed to behold with pleasure; but no sooner touched than the current, which, though not noisy or turbulent, was yet irresistible, bore him away. Beyond these islands all was darkness, nor could any of the 10 passengers describe the shore at which he first embarked.

Before me, and on each side, was an expanse of waters violently agitated, and covered with so thick a mist, that the most perspicacious eye could see but a 15 little way. It appeared to be full of rocks and whirlpools, for many sunk unexpectedly while they were courting the gale with full sails, and insulting those whom they had left behind. So numerous, indeed, were the dangers, and so thick the darkness, that no caution 20 could confer security. Yet there were many who, by false intelligence, betrayed their followers into whirlpools, or by violence pushed those whom they found in their way against the rocks.

The current was invariable and insurmountable; but 25 though it was impossible to sail against it, or to return to the place that was once passed, yet it was not so violent as to allow no opportunities for dexterity or courage, since, though none could retreat back from danger, yet they might often avoid it by oblique di- 30 rection.

It was, however, not very common to steer with much care or prudence; for by some universal infatuation, every man appeared to think himself safe, though he saw his consorts every moment sinking round him; and 35 no sooner had the waves closed over them, than their fate and their misconduct were forgotten; the voyage

was pursued with the same jocund confidence; every man congratulated himself upon the soundness of his vessel, and believed himself able to stem the whirlpool in which his friend was swallowed, or glide over the rocks on which he was dashed: nor was it often observed that the sight of a wreck made any man change his course: if he turned aside for a moment, he soon forgot the rudder, and left himself again to the disposal of chance.

- 10 This negligence did not proceed from indifference, or from weariness of their present condition; for not one of those who thus rushed upon destruction, failed, when he was sinking, to call loudly upon his associates for that help which could not now be given him; and  
15 many spent their last moments in cautioning others against the folly by which they were intercepted in the midst of their course. Their benevolence was sometimes praised, but their admonitions were unregarded.
- 20 The vessels in which we had embarked being confessedly unequal to the turbulence of the stream of life, were visibly impaired in the course of the voyage; so that every passenger was certain, that how long soever he might, by favorable accidents, or by incessant vigi-  
25 lance be preserved, he must sink at last.

- This necessity of perishing might have been expected to sadden the gay, and intimidate the daring, at least to keep the melancholy and timorous in perpetual torments, and hinder them from any enjoyment of the  
30 varieties and gratifications which nature offered them as the solace of their labors; yet, in effect, none seemed less to expect destruction than those to whom it was most dreadful; they all had the art of concealing their danger from themselves; and those who knew their in-  
35 ability to bear the sight of the terrors that embarrassed their way, took care never to look forward, but found some amusement for the present moment, and generally

entertained themselves by playing with HOPE, who was the constant associate of the voyage of life.

Yet all that HOPE ventured to promise, even to those whom she favored most, was, not that they should escape, but that they should sink last; and with this promise 5 every one was satisfied, though he laughed at the rest for seeming to believe it. HOPE, indeed, apparently mocked the credulity of her companions; for, in proportion as their vessels grew leaky, she redoubled her assurances of safety; and none were more busy in 10 making provisions for a long voyage, than they whom all but themselves saw likely to perish soon by irreparable decay.

In the midst of the current of life was the Gulf of INTemperance, a dreadful whirlpool, interspersed with 15 rocks, of which the pointed crags were concealed under water, and the tops covered with herbage, on which EASE spread couches of repose, and with shades, where PLEASURE warbled the song of invitation. Within sight of these rocks all who sailed on the ocean of life must 20 necessarily pass. REASON, indeed, was always at hand to steer the passengers through a narrow outlet by which they might escape; but very few could, by her entreaties or remonstrances, be induced to put the rudder into her hand, without stipulating that she should 25 approach so near unto the rocks of PLEASURE, that they might solace themselves with a short enjoyment of that delicious region, after which they always determined to pursue their course without any other deviation.

REASON was too often prevailed upon so far by these 30 promises, as to venture her charge within the eddy of the Gulf of INTemperance, where, indeed, the circumvolution was weak, but yet interrupted the course of the vessel, and drew it, by insensible rotations, towards the centre. She then repented her temerity, and with 35 all her force endeavored to retreat; but the draught of the gulf was generally too strong to be overcome; and

the passenger, having danced in circles with a pleasing and giddy velocity, was at last overwhelmed and lost. Those few whom REASON was able to extricate generally suffered so many shocks upon the points which  
5 shot out from the rocks of PLEASURE, that they were unable to continue their course with the same strength and facility as before, but floated along timorously and feebly, endangered by every breeze, and shattered by every ruffle of the water, till they sunk, by slow degrees,  
10 after long struggles and innumerable expedients, always repining at their own folly, and warning others against the first approach of the Gulf of INTemperance.

There were artists who professed to repair the breaches and stop the leaks of the vessels which had been shat-  
15 tered on the rocks of PLEASURE. Many appeared to have great confidence in their skill, and some, indeed, were preserved by it from sinking, who had received only a single blow; but I remarked that few vessels lasted long which had been much repaired, nor was it found  
20 that the artists themselves continued afloat longer than those who had least of their assistance.

The only advantage which, in the voyage of life, the cautious had above the negligent was, that they sunk later, and more suddenly; for they passed forward till  
25 they had sometimes seen all those in whose company they had issued from the straits of infancy, perish in the way, and at last were upset by a cross breeze, without the toil of resistance, or the anguish of expectation. But such as had often fallen against the rocks of  
30 PLEASURE commonly subsided by sensible degrees, contended long with the encroaching waters, and harassed themselves by labors that scarce HOPE herself could flatter with success. As I was looking upon the various fate of the multitude about me, I was suddenly alarmed  
35 with an admonition from some unknown power, 'Gaze not idly upon others when thou thyself art sinking. Whence is this thoughtless tranquillity, when thou and



they are equally endangered?' I looked, and seeing the Gulf of INTemperance before me, started and awaked.

No. 108. SATURDAY, March 30, 1751

——— *Sapere aude;*

*Incipe. Qui recte vivendi prorogat horam,  
Rusticus exspectat dum defluat amnis: at ille  
Labitur, et labetur in omne volubilis ævum.*

—HOR. *Ep.* 1. 2. 40-43.

Begin, be bold, and venture to be wise;  
He who defers this work from day to day,  
Does on a river's bank expecting stay,  
Till the whole stream, which stopp'd him, should be gone,  
That runs, and as it runs, for ever will run on.

—COWLEY.

AN ancient poet, unreasonably discontented at the present state of things, which his system of opinions 5 obliged him to represent in its worst form, has observed of the earth, 'that its greater part is covered by the uninhabitable ocean; that of the rest some is encumbered with naked mountains, and some lost under barren sands; some scorched with unintermitted heat, and some 10 petrified with perpetual frost; so that only a few regions remain for the production of fruits, the pasture of cattle, and the accommodation of man.'

The same observation may be transferred to the time allotted us in our present state. When we have deducted 15 all that is absorbed in sleep, all that is inevitably appropriated to the demands of nature, or irresistibly engrossed by the tyranny of custom; all that passes in regulating the superficial decorations of life, or is given up in the reciprocations of civility to the disposal of 20 others; all that is torn from us by the violence of disease, or stolen imperceptibly away by lassitude and languor; we shall find that part of our duration very small of which we can truly call ourselves masters, or which we can spend wholly at our own choice. Many 25 of our hours are lost in a rotation of petty cares, in

a constant recurrence of the same employments; many of our provisions for ease or happiness are always exhausted by the present day; and a great part of our existence serves no other purpose than that of enabling  
5 us to enjoy the rest.

Of the few moments which are left in our disposal, it may reasonably be expected that we should be so frugal, as to let none of them slip from us without some equivalent; and perhaps it might be found, that as the earth,  
10 however straitened by rocks and waters, is capable of producing more than all its inhabitants are able to consume, our lives, though much contracted by incidental distraction, would yet afford us a large space vacant to the exercise of reason and virtue; that we want not  
15 time, but diligence, for great performances; and that we squander much of our allowance, even while we think it sparing and insufficient.

This natural and necessary comminution of our lives, perhaps, often makes us insensible of the negligence  
20 with which we suffer them to slide away. We never consider ourselves as possessed at once of time sufficient for any great design, and therefore indulge ourselves in fortuitous amusements. We think it unnecessary to take an account of a few supernumerary moments,  
25 which, however employed, could have produced little advantage, and which were exposed to a thousand chances of disturbance and interruption.

It is observable, that, either by nature or by habit, our faculties are fitted to images of a certain extent,  
30 to which we adjust great things by division, and little things by accumulation. Of extensive surfaces we can only take a survey as the parts succeed one another; and atoms we cannot perceive till they are united into masses. Thus we break the vast periods of time into  
35 centuries and years; and thus, if we would know the amount of moments, we must agglomerate them into days and weeks.

The proverbial oracles of our parsimonious ancestors have informed us that the fatal waste of fortune is by small expenses, by the profusion of sums too little singly to alarm our caution, and which we never suffer ourselves to consider together. Of the same kind is the prodigality of life; he that hopes to look back hereafter with satisfaction upon past years, must learn to know the present value of single minutes, and endeavor to let no particle of time fall useless to the ground.

It is usual for those who are advised to the attainment of any new qualification, to look upon themselves as required to change the general course of their conduct, to dismiss business, and exclude pleasure, and to devote their days and nights to a particular attention. But all common degrees of excellence are attainable at a lower price; he that should steadily and resolutely assign to any science or language those interstitial vacancies which intervene in the most crowded variety of diversion or employment, would find every day new irradiations of knowledge, and discover how much more is to be hoped from frequency and perseverance, than from violent efforts and sudden desires; efforts which are soon remitted when they encounter difficulty, and desires which, if they are indulged too often, will shake off the authority of reason, and range capriciously from one object to another.

The disposition to defer every important design to a time of leisure, and a state of settled uniformity, proceeds generally from a false estimate of the human powers. If we except those gigantic and stupendous intelligences who are said to grasp a system by intuition, and bound forward from one series of conclusions to another, without regular steps through intermediate propositions, the most successful students make their advances in knowledge by short flights, between each of which the mind may lie at rest. For every single act of progression a short time is sufficient; and

it is only necessary, that, whenever that time is afforded, it be well employed.

Few minds will be long confined to severe and laborious meditation; and when a successful attack on knowledge has been made, the student recreates himself with the contemplation of his conquest, and forbears another incursion, till the new-acquired truth has become familiar, and his curiosity calls upon him for fresh gratifications. Whether the time of intermission is spent in company, or in solitude, in necessary business, or in voluntary levities, the understanding is equally abstracted from the object of inquiry; but perhaps, if it be detained by occupations less pleasing, it returns again to study with greater alacrity than when it is glutted with ideal pleasures, and surfeited with intemperance of application. He that will not suffer himself to be discouraged by fancied impossibilities may sometimes find his abilities invigorated by the necessity of exerting them in short intervals, as the force of a current is increased by the contraction of its channel.

From some cause like this it has probably proceeded, that, among those who have contributed to the advancement of learning, many have risen to eminence in opposition to all the obstacles which external circumstances could place in their way, amidst the tumult of business, the distresses of poverty, or the dissipations of a wandering and unsettled state. A great part of the life of Erasmus was one continual peregrination, ill supplied with the gifts of fortune, and led from city to city, and from kingdom to kingdom, by the hopes of patrons and preferment, hopes which always flattered and always deceived him; he yet found means, by unshaken constancy, and a vigilant improvement of those hours which, in the midst of the most restless activity, will remain unengaged, to write more than another in the same condition would have hoped to read. Compelled by want to attendance and solicitation, and so

much versed in common life, that he has transmitted to us the most perfect delineation of the manners of his age, he joined to his knowledge of the world such application to books, that he will stand for ever in the first rank of literary heroes. How this proficiency was 5 obtained he sufficiently discovers, by informing us that the *Praise of Folly*, one of his most celebrated performances, was composed by him on the road to Italy; 'ne totum illud tempus, quo equo fuit insidendum, illiteratis fabulis tereretur'—'lest the hours which he was obliged 10 to spend on horseback should be tattled away without regard to literature.'

An Italian philosopher expressed in his motto, that 'time was his estate'; an estate, indeed, which will produce nothing without cultivation, but will always abundantly repay the labors of industry, and satisfy the most extensive desires, if no part of it be suffered to lie waste by negligence, to be overrun with noxious plants, or laid out for show rather than for use.

### NO. 117. TUESDAY, April 30, 1751

'Οσσαν ἐπ' Οὐλύμπῳ μῆμασαν θέμεν, αὐτὰρ ἐπ' Ὀσση  
Πήλιον εἰνοσίφυλλον, ἱν' οὐρανὸς ἀμβατὸς εἴη.—HOM. *Od.* 11. 315. 16.

The gods they challenge, and affect the skies:  
Heav'd on Olympus tott'ring Ossa stood;  
On Ossa, Pellon nods with all his wood.—POPE.

### TO THE RAMBLER

SIR:

20

NOTHING has more retarded the advancement of learning than the disposition of vulgar minds to ridicule and vilify what they cannot comprehend. All industry must be excited by hope; and as the student often proposes no other reward to himself than praise, he is easily 25 discouraged by contempt and insult. He who brings with him into a clamorous multitude the timidity of recluse speculation, and has never hardened his front

in public life, or accustomed his passions to the vicissitudes and accidents, the triumphs and defeats of mixed conversation, will blush at the stare of petulant incredulity, and suffer himself to be driven by a burst of 5 laughter from the fortresses of demonstration. The mechanist will be afraid to assert, before hardy contradiction, the possibility of tearing down bulwarks with a silk-worm's thread; and the astronomer of relating the rapidity of light, the distance of the fixed stars, 10 and the height of the lunar mountains.

If I could by any efforts have shaken off this cowardice, I had not sheltered myself under a borrowed name, nor applied to you for the means of communicating to the public the theory of a garret; a subject which, ex- 15 cept some slight and transient strictures, has been hitherto neglected by those who were best qualified to adorn it, either for want of leisure to prosecute the various researches in which a nice discussion must engage them, or because it requires such diversity of 20 knowledge, and such extent of curiosity, as is scarcely to be found in any single intellect: or perhaps others foresaw the tumults which would be raised against them, and confined their knowledge to their own breasts, and abandoned prejudice and folly to the direction of chance. 25 That the professors of literature generally reside in the highest stories, has been immemorially observed. The wisdom of the ancients was well acquainted with the intellectual advantages of an elevated situation: why else were the Muses stationed on Olympus or Parnassus 30 by those who could with equal right have raised them bowers in the vale of Tempe, or erected their altars among the flexures of Meander? Why was Jove himself nursed upon a mountain? Or why did the goddesses, when the prize of beauty was contested, try the cause 35 upon the top of Ida? Such were the fictions by which the great masters of the earlier ages endeavored to inculcate to posterity the importance of a garret, which,

though they had been long obscured by the negligence and ignorance of succeeding times, were well enforced by the celebrated symbol of Pythagoras, ἀνεμῶν πνεόντων τὴν ἡχώ προσκίνει — ‘when the wind blows, worship its echo.’ This could not but be understood by his disciples as an inviolable injunction to live in a garret, which I have found frequently visited by the echo and the wind. Nor was the tradition wholly obliterated in the age of Augustus, for Tibullus evidently congratulates himself upon his garret, not without some allusion 10 to the Pythagorean precept:

*Quam juvat immites ventos audire cubantem——  
Aut, gelidas hybernus aquas cum fuderit auster,  
Securum somnos, imbre juvante, sequi!*

How sweet is sleep to pass the careless hours,  
Lull'd by the beating winds and dashing show'rs!

And it is impossible not to discover the fondness of 15 Lucretius, an earlier writer, for a garret, in his description of the lofty towers of serene learning, and of the pleasure with which a wise man looks down upon the confused and erratic state of the world moving below him:

20

*Sed nil dulcius est, bene quam munita tenere  
Edita doctrina sapientum templa sarena;  
Despicere unde queas alios, passimque videre  
Errare, atque viam palantis quærere vitæ.*

——— ‘Tis sweet thy lab'ring steps to guide  
To virtue's heights, with wisdom well supplied,  
And all the magazines of learning fortified:  
From thence to look below on human kind,  
Bewilder'd in the maze of life, and blind.—DRYDEN.

The institution has, indeed, continued to our own 25 time; the garret is still the usual receptacle of the philosopher and poet; but this, like many ancient customs, is perpetuated only by an accidental imitation, without knowledge of the original reason for which it was established.

30

*Causa latet; res est notissima.*

The cause is secret, but th' effect is known.—ADDISON.

Conjectures have, indeed, been advanced concerning these habitations of literature, but without much satisfaction to the judicious inquirer. Some have imagined that the garret is generally chosen by the wits as most easily rented; and concluded that no man rejoices in his aerial abode, but on the days of payment. Others suspect that a garret is chiefly convenient, as it is remoter than any other part of the house from the outer door, which is often observed to be infested by visitants, who talk incessantly of beer, or linen, or a coat, and repeat the same sounds every morning, and sometimes again in the afternoon, without any variation, except that they grow daily more importunate and clamorous, and raise their voices in time from mournful murmurs to raging vociferations. This eternal monotony is always detestable to a man whose chief pleasure is to enlarge his knowledge, and vary his ideas. Others talk of freedom from noise, and abstraction from common business or amusements; and some, yet more visionary, tell us that the faculties are enlarged by open prospects, and that the fancy is more at liberty, when the eye ranges without confinement.

These conveniences may perhaps all be found in a well-chosen garret; but surely they cannot be supposed sufficiently important to have operated unvariably upon different climates, distant ages, and separate nations. Of an universal practice, there must still be presumed an universal cause, which, however recondite and abstruse, may be perhaps reserved to make me illustrious by its discovery, and you by its promulgation.

It is universally known that the faculties of the mind are invigorated or weakened by the state of the body, and that the body is in a great measure regulated by the various compressions of the ambient element. The effects of the air in the production or cure of corporeal maladies have been acknowledged from the time of Hippocrates; but no man has yet sufficiently con-



sidered how far it may influence the operations of the genius, though every day affords instances of local understanding, of wits and reasoners, whose faculties are adapted to some single spot, and who, when they are removed to any other place, sink at once into silence 5 and stupidity. I have discovered, by a long series of observations, that invention and elocution suffer great impediments from dense and impure vapors, and that the tenuity of a defecated air at a proper distance from the surface of the earth, accelerates the fancy, and sets 10 at liberty those intellectual powers which were before shackled by too strong attraction, and unable to expand themselves under the pressure of a gross atmosphere. I have found dullness to quicken into sentiment in a thin ether, as water, though not very hot, boils in a 15 receiver partly exhausted; and heads, in appearance empty, have teemed with notions upon rising ground, as the flaccid sides of a football would have swelled out into stiffness and extension.

For this reason I never think myself qualified to 20 judge decisively of any man's faculties whom I have only known in one degree of elevation; but take some opportunity of attending him from the cellar to the garret, and try upon him all the various degrees of rarefaction and condensation, tension and laxity. If he 25 is neither vivacious aloft, nor serious below, I then consider him as hopeless; but as it seldom happens that I do not find the temper to which the texture of his brain is fitted, I accommodate him in time with a tube of mercury, first marking the points most favor- 30 able to his intellects, according to rules which I have long studied, and which I may, perhaps, reveal to mankind in a complete treatise of barometrical pneumatology.

Another cause of the gaiety and sprightliness of the 35 dwellers in garrets is probably the increase of that vertiginous motion with which we are carried round by the



The Distressed Poet, by Hogarth, 1738-40. The poet is interrupted in composing a poem on Riches by the milk-woman's demand for long arrears of pay. His appearance was said to resemble that of Theobald, hero of the *Dunciad*.



diurnal revolution of the earth. The power of agitation upon the spirits is well known; every man has felt his heart lightened in a rapid vehicle, or on a galloping horse; and nothing is plainer, than that he who towers 5 to the fifth story is whirled through more space by every circumrotation, than another that grovels upon the ground-floor. The nations between the tropics are known to be fiery, inconstant, inventive, and fanciful; because, living at the utmost length of the earth's diameter, they are carried about with more swiftness than 10 those whom nature has placed nearer to the poles; and therefore, as it becomes a wise man to struggle with the inconveniencies of his country, whenever celerity and acuteness are requisite, we must actuate our langor 15 by taking a few turns round the centre in a garret.

If you imagine that I ascribe to air and motion effects which they cannot produce, I desire you to consult your own memory, and consider whether you have never known a man acquire reputation in his garret, 20 which, when fortune or a patron had placed him upon the first floor, he was unable to maintain; and who never recovered his former vigor of understanding, till he was restored to his original situation. That a garret will make every man a wit, I am very far from supposing; I know there are some who would continue block-heads even on the summit of the Andes, or on the peak of Teneriffe. But let not any man be considered as unimprovable till this potent remedy has been tried; for perhaps he was formed to be great only in a garret, 30 as the joiner of Aretæus was rational in no other place but his own shop.

I think a frequent removal to various distances from the centre so necessary to a just estimate of intellectual abilities, and consequently of so great use in education, 35 that if I hoped that the public could be persuaded to so expensive an experiment, I would propose, that there should be a cavern dug, and a tower erected, like those

which Bacon describes in Solomon's house, for the expansion and concentration of understanding, according to the exigence of different employments or constitutions. Perhaps some that fume away in meditations upon time and space in the tower, might compose tables of interest at a certain depth; and he that upon level ground stagnates in silence, or creeps in narrative, might, at the height of half a mile, ferment into merriment, sparkle with repartee, and froth with declamation.

Addison observes, that we may find the heat of Virgil's 10 climate in some lines of his *Georgic*: so, when I read a composition, I immediately determine the height of the author's habitation. As an elaborate performance is commonly said to smell of the lamp, my commendation of a noble thought, a sprightly sally, or a bold 15 figure, is to pronounce it fresh from the garret; an expression which would break from me upon the perusal of most of your papers, did I not believe that you sometimes quit the garret, and ascend into the cock-loft.

20

## HYPERTATUS.

No. 120. SATURDAY, *May* 11, 1751

*Redditum Cyri solio Phraaten,  
Dissidens plebi, numero beatorum  
Eximit virtus, populumque falsis  
Dedocet uti*

*Vocibus.*—HOR. *Od.* 2. 2. 17-21.

True virtue can the crowd unteach  
Their false mistaken forms of speech;  
Virtue, to crowds a foe profest,  
Disdains to number with the blest  
Phraates, by his slaves ador'd,  
And to the Parthian crown restor'd.—FRANCIS.

In the reign of Jenghiz Can, conqueror of the East, in the city of Samarcand, lived Nouradin the merchant, renowned throughout all the regions of India for the extent of his commerce, and the integrity of his dealings. 25 His warehouses were filled with all the commodities of

the remotest nations; every rarity of nature, every curiosity of art, whatever was valuable, whatever was useful, hasted to his hand. The streets were crowded with his carriages; the sea was covered with his ships; 5 the streams of Oxus were wearied with conveyance, and every breeze of the sky wafted wealth to Nouradin.

At length Nouradin felt himself seized with a slow malady, which he first endeavored to divert by application, and afterwards to relieve by luxury and indulgence; but finding his strength every day less, he was 10 at last terrified, and called for help upon the sages of physic; they filled his apartments with alexipharmics, restoratives, and essential virtues; the pearls of the ocean were dissolved, the spices of Arabia were distilled, and all the powers of nature were employed 15 to give new spirits to his nerves, and new balsam to his blood. Nouradin was for some time amused with promises, invigorated with cordials, or soothed with anodynes; but the disease preyed upon his vitals, and 20 he soon discovered with indignation, that health was not to be bought. He was confined to his chamber, deserted by his physicians, and rarely visited by his friends; but his unwillingness to die flattered him long with hopes of life.

25 At length, having passed the night in tedious languor, he called to him Almamoulin, his only son, and dismissing his attendants, 'My son,' says he, 'behold here the weakness and fragility of man; look backward a few days, thy father was great and happy, fresh as 30 the vernal rose, and strong as the cedar of the mountain; the nations of Asia drank his dews, and art and commerce delighted in his shade. Malevolence beheld me, and sighed: "His root," she cried, "is fixed in the depths; it is watered by the fountains of Oxus; it sends 35 out branches afar, and bids defiance to the blast; prudence reclines against his trunk, and prosperity dances on his top." Now, Almamoulin, look upon me wither-

ing and prostrate; look upon me, and attend. I have trafficked, I have prospered, I have rioted in gain; my house is splendid, my servants are numerous; yet I displayed only a small part of my riches; the rest, which I was hindered from enjoying by the fear of 5 raising envy, or tempting rapacity, I have piled in towers, I have buried in caverns, I have hidden in secret repositories, which this scroll will discover. My purpose was, after ten months more spent in commerce, to have withdrawn my wealth to a safer country; to 10 have given seven years to delight and festivity, and the remaining part of my days to solitude and repentance; but the hand of death is upon me; a frigid torpor enroaches upon my veins; I am now leaving the produce of my toil, which it must be thy business 15 to enjoy with wisdom.' The thought of leaving his wealth filled Nouradin with such grief, that he fell into convulsions, became delirious, and expired.

Almamoulin, who loved his father, was touched awhile with honest sorrow, and sat two hours in pro- 20 found meditation, without perusing the paper which he held in his hand. He then retired to his own chamber, as overborne with affliction, and there read the inventory of his new possessions, which swelled his heart with such transports, that he no longer lamented his 25 father's death. He was now sufficiently composed to order a funeral of modest magnificence, suitable at once to the rank of Nouradin's profession, and the reputation of his wealth. The two next nights he spent in visiting the tower and the caverns, and found the treasures 30 greater to his eye than to his imagination.

Almamoulin had been bred to the practice of exact frugality, and had often looked with envy on the finery and expenses of other young men: he therefore believed that happiness was now in his power, since he could 35 obtain all of which he had hitherto been accustomed to regret the want. He resolved to give a loose to

his desires, to revel in enjoyment, and feel pain or uneasiness no more.

He immediately procured a splendid equipage, dressed his servants in rich embroidery, and covered his horses 5 with golden caparisons. He showered down silver on the populace, and suffered their acclamations to swell him with insolence. The nobles saw him with anger, the wise men of the state combined against him, the leaders of armies threatened his destruction. Alma- 10 moulin was informed of his danger: he put on the robe of mourning in the presence of his enemies, and appeased them with gold, and gems, and supplication.

He then sought to strengthen himself, by an alliance with the princes of Tartary, and offered the price of 15 kingdoms for a wife of noble birth. His suit was generally rejected, and his presents refused; but a princess of Astracan once condescended to admit him to her presence. She received him sitting on a throne, attired in the robe of royalty, and shining with the 20 jewels of Golconda; command sparkled in her eyes, and dignity towered on her forehead. Almamoulin approached and trembled. She saw his confusion and disdained him. 'How,' says she, 'dares the wretch hope my obedience, who thus shrinks at my glance? Retire, 25 and enjoy thy riches in sordid ostentation; thou wast born to be wealthy, but never canst be great.'

He then contracted his desires to more private and domestic pleasures. He built palaces, he laid out gardens, he changed the face of the land, he transplanted 30 forests, he levelled mountains, opened prospects into distant regions, poured fountains from the tops of turrets, and rolled rivers through new channels.

These amusements pleased him for a time; but languor and weariness soon invaded him. His bowers lost their 35 fragrance, and the waters murmured without notice. He purchased large tracts of land in distant provinces, adorned them with houses of pleasure, and diversified them with



accommodations for different seasons. Change of place at first relieved his satiety, but all the novelties of situation were soon exhausted; he found his heart vacant, and his desires, for want of external objects, ravaging himself. 5

He therefore returned to Samarcand, and set open his doors to those whom idleness sends out in search of pleasure. His tables were always covered with delicacies; wines of every vintage sparkled in his bowls, and his lamps scattered perfumes. The sound of the 10 lute, and the voice of the singer, chased away sadness; every hour was crowded with pleasure; and the day ended and began with feasts and dances, and revelry and merriment. Almamoulin cried out: 'I have at last found the use of riches; I am surrounded by com- 15 panions, who view my greatness without envy; and I enjoy at once the raptures of popularity, and the safety of an obscure station. What trouble can he feel, whom all are studious to please, that they may be repaid with pleasure? What danger can he dread, to whom every 20 man is a friend?'

Such were the thoughts of Almamoulin, as he looked down from a gallery upon the gay assembly, regaling at his expense; but in the midst of this soliloquy, an officer of justice entered the house, and, in the form of 25 legal citation, summoned Almamoulin to appear before the emperor. The guests stood awhile aghast, then stole imperceptibly away, and he was led off without a single voice to witness his integrity. He now found one of his most frequent visitants accusing him of treason, in 30 hopes of sharing his confiscation; yet, unpatronized and unsupported, he cleared himself by the openness of innocence, and the consistence of truth; he was dismissed with honor, and his accuser perished in prison.

Almamoulin now perceived with how little reason he 35 had hoped for justice or fidelity from those who live only to gratify their senses; and, being now weary

with vain experiments upon life and fruitless researches after felicity, he had recourse to a sage, who, after spending his youth in travel and observation, had retired from all human cares, to a small habitation on the banks of Oxus, where he conversed only with such as solicited his counsel. 'Brother,' said the philosopher, 'thou hast suffered thy reason to be deluded by idle hopes, and fallacious appearances. Having long looked with desire upon riches, thou hadst taught thyself to think them more valuable than nature designed them, and to expect from them what experience has now taught thee that they cannot give. That they do not confer wisdom, thou mayest be convinced, by considering at how dear a price they tempted thee, upon thy first entrance into the world, to purchase the empty sound of vulgar acclamation. That they cannot bestow fortitude or magnanimity, that man may be certain who stood trembling at Astracan before a being not naturally superior to himself. That they will not supply unexhausted pleasure, the recollection of forsaken palaces, and neglected gardens, will easily inform thee. That they rarely purchase friends, thou didst soon discover, when thou wert left to stand thy trial uncountenanced and alone. Yet think not riches useless; there are purposes to which a wise man may be delighted to apply them; they may, by a rational distribution to those who want them, ease the pains of helpless disease, still the throbs of restless anxiety, relieve innocence from oppression, and raise imbecility to cheerfulness and vigor. This they will enable thee to perform, and this will afford the only happiness ordained for our present state—the confidence of divine favor, and the hope of future rewards.'

No. 134. SATURDAY, June 29, 1751

*Quis scit, an adiciant hodiernæ crastina summæ  
Tempora Di superi?*—HOR. Od. 4. 7. 17.

Who knows if Heav'n, with ever-bounteous pow'r,  
Shall add to-morrow to the present hour?—FRANCIS.

I SAT yesterday morning employed in deliberating on which, among the various subjects that occurred to my imagination, I should bestow the paper of to-day. After a short effort of meditation by which nothing was determined, I grew every moment more irresolute, my ideas wandered from the first intention, and I rather wished to think, than thought, upon any settled subject; till at last I was awakened from this dream of study by a summons from the press; the time was come for which I had been thus negligently purposing to pro-10 vide, and, however dubious or sluggish, I was now necessitated to write.

Though to a writer whose design is so comprehensive and miscellaneous, that he may accommodate himself with a topic from every scene of life, or view of nature, 15 it is no great aggravation of his task to be obliged to a sudden composition; yet I could not forbear to reproach myself for having so long neglected what was unavoidably to be done, and of which every moment's idleness increased the difficulty. There was, however, 20 some pleasure in reflecting that I, who had only trifled till diligence was necessary, might still congratulate myself upon my superiority to multitudes, who have trifled till diligence is vain; who can by no degree of activity or resolution recover the opportunities which 25 have slipped away; and who are condemned by their own carelessness to hopeless calamity and barren sorrow.

The folly of allowing ourselves to delay what we know cannot be finally escaped, is one of the general weaknesses which, in spite of the instruction of moralists, 30 and the remonstrances of reason, prevail to a greater

or less degree in every mind; even they who most steadily withstand it, find it, if not the most violent, the most pertinacious of their passions, always renewing its attacks, and though often vanquished, never destroyed.

It is indeed natural to have particular regard to the time present, and to be most solicitous for that which is by its nearness enabled to make the strongest impressions. When therefore any sharp pain is to be suffered, or any formidable danger to be incurred, we can scarcely exempt ourselves wholly from the seducements of imagination; we readily believe that another day will bring some support or advantage which we now want; and are easily persuaded, that the moment of necessity, which we desire never to arrive, is at a great distance from us.

Thus life is languished away in the gloom of anxiety, and consumed in collecting resolution which the next morning dissipates; in forming purposes which we scarcely hope to keep, and reconciling ourselves to our own cowardice by excuses, which, while we admit them, we know to be absurd. Our firmness is, by the continual contemplation of misery, hourly impaired; every submission to our fear enlarges its dominion; we not only waste that time in which the evil we dread might have been suffered and surmounted, but even where procrastination produces no absolute increase of our difficulties, make them less superable to ourselves by habitual terrors. When evils cannot be avoided, it is wise to contract the interval of expectation; to meet the mischiefs which will overtake us if we fly; and and suffer only their real malignity, without the conflicts of doubt and anguish of anticipation.

To act is far easier than to suffer; yet we every day see the progress of life retarded by the *vis inertiae*, the mere repugnance to motion, and find multitudes repining at the want of that which nothing but idleness

hinders them from enjoying. The case of Tantalus, in the region of poetic punishment, was somewhat to be pitied, because the fruits that hung about him retired from his hand; but what tenderness can be claimed by those who, though perhaps they suffer the pains of 5 Tantalus, will never lift their hands for their own relief?

There is nothing more common among this torpid generation than murmurs and complaints; murmurs at uneasiness which only vacancy and suspicion expose 10 them to feel, and complaints of distresses which it is in their own power to remove. Laziness is commonly associated with timidity. Either fear originally prohibits endeavors by infusing despair of success; or the frequent failure of irresolute struggles, and the constant 15 desire of avoiding labor, impress by degrees false terrors on the mind. But fear, whether natural or acquired, when once it has full possession of the fancy, never fails to employ it upon visions of calamity, such as, if they are not dissipated by useful employment, 20 will soon overcast it with horrors, and embitter life not only with those miseries by which all earthly beings are really more or less tormented, but with those which do not yet exist, and which can only be discerned by the perspicacity of cowardice. 25

Among all who sacrifice future advantage to present inclination, scarcely any gain so little as those that suffer themselves to freeze in idleness. Others are corrupted by some enjoyment of more or less power to gratify the passions; but to neglect our duties, merely 30 to avoid the labor of performing them, a labor which is always punctually rewarded, is surely to sink under weak temptations. Idleness never can secure tranquillity; the call of reason and of conscience will pierce the closest pavilion of the sluggard, and though it may 35 not have force to drive him from his down, will be loud enough to hinder him from sleep. Those moments

which he cannot resolve to make useful by devoting them to the great business of his being, will still be usurped by powers that will not leave them to his disposal; remorse and vexation will seize upon them, and forbid him to enjoy what he is so desirous to appropriate.

There are other causes of inactivity incident to more active faculties and more acute discernment. He to whom many objects of pursuit arise at the same time, will frequently hesitate between different desires, till a rival has precluded him, or change his course as new attractions prevail, and harass himself without advancing. He who sees different ways to the same end, will, unless he watches carefully over his own conduct, lay out too much of his attention upon the comparison of probabilities and the adjustment of expedients, and pause in the choice of his road till some accident intercepts his journey. He whose penetration extends to remote consequences, and who, whenever he applies his attention to any design, discovers new prospects of advantage and possibilities of improvement, will not easily be persuaded that his project is ripe for execution; but will superadd one contrivance to another, endeavor to unite various purposes in one operation, multiply complications, and refine niceties, till he is entangled in his own scheme, and bewildered in the perplexity of various intentions. He that resolves to unite all the beauties of situation in a new purchase, must waste his life in roving to no purpose from province to province. He that hopes in the same house to obtain every convenience may draw plans and study Palladio, but will never lay a stone. He will attempt a treatise on some important subject, and amass materials, consult authors, and study all the dependent and collateral parts of learning, but never conclude himself qualified to write. He that has abilities to conceive perfection, will not easily be content without it; and since perfec-

tion cannot be reached, will lose the opportunity of doing well in the vain hope of unattainable excellence.

The certainty that life cannot be long, and the probability that it will be much shorter than nature allows, ought to awaken every man to the active prosecution of 5 whatever he is desirous to perform. It is true, that no diligence can ascertain success; death may intercept the swiftest career; but he who is cut off in the execution of an honest undertaking, has at least the honor of falling in his rank, and has fought the battle though 10 he missed the victory.

No. 137. TUESDAY, July 9, 1751

*Dum vitant stulti vitia, in contraria currunt.*

—HOR. Sat. 1. 2. 24.

———Whilst fools one vice condemn,

They run into the opposite extreme.—CREECH.

THAT wonder is the effect of ignorance, has been often observed. The awful stillness of attention, with which the mind is overspread at the first view of an unexpected effect, ceases when we have leisure to dis- 15 entangle complications and investigate causes. Wonder is a pause of reason, a sudden cessation of the mental progress, which lasts only while the understanding is fixed upon some single idea, and is at an end when it recovers force enough to divide the object into its parts, 20 or mark the intermediate gradations from the first agent to the last consequence.

It may be remarked with equal truth, that ignorance is often the effect of wonder. It is common for those who have never accustomed themselves to the labor of 25 inquiry, nor invigorated their confidence by conquests over difficulty, to sleep in the gloomy quiescence of astonishment, without any effort to animate inquiry or dispel obscurity. What they cannot immediately conceive, they consider as too high to be reached, or too 30 extensive to be comprehended; they therefore content

themselves with the gaze of folly, forbear to attempt what they have no hopes of performing, and resign the pleasure of rational contemplation to more pertinacious study or more active faculties.

5 Among the productions of mechanic art, many are of a form so different from that of their first materials, and many consist of parts so numerous and so nicely adapted to each other, that it is not possible to view them without amazement. But when we enter the shops  
10 of artificers, observe the various tools by which every operation is facilitated, and trace the progress of a manufacture through the different hands that, in succession to each other, contribute to its perfection, we soon discover that every single man has an easy task,  
15 and that the extremes, however remote, of natural rudeness and artificial elegance, are joined by a regular concatenation of effects, of which every one is introduced by that which precedes it, and equally introduces that which is to follow.

20 The same is the state of intellectual and manual performances. Long calculations or complex diagrams affright the timorous and unexperienced from a second view; but if we have skill sufficient to analyze them into simple principles, it will be discovered that our  
25 fear was groundless. 'Divide and conquer,' is a principle equally just in science as in policy. Complication is a species of confederacy, which, while it continues united, bids defiance to the most active and vigorous intellect; but of which every member is separately weak,  
30 and which may, therefore, be quickly subdued, if it can once be broken.

The chief art of learning, as Locke has observed, is to attempt but little at a time. The widest excursions of the mind are made by short flights frequently re-  
35 peated; the most lofty fabrics of science are formed by the continued accumulation of single propositions.

It often happens, whatever be the cause, that im-



patience of labor, or dread of miscarriage, seizes those who are most distinguished for quickness of apprehension; and that they who might with greatest reason promise themselves victory, are least willing to hazard the encounter. This diffidence, where the attention is 5 not laid asleep by laziness, or dissipated by pleasure, can arise only from confused and general views, such as negligence snatches in haste, or from the disappointment of the first hopes formed by arrogance without reflection. To expect that the intricacies of science will 10 be pierced by a careless glance, or the eminences of fame ascended without labor, is to expect a particular privilege, a power denied to the rest of mankind; but to suppose that the maze is inscrutable to diligence, or the heights inaccessible to perseverance, is to submit 15 tamely to the tyranny of fancy, and enchain the mind in voluntary shackles.

It is the proper ambition of the heroes in literature to enlarge the boundaries of knowledge by discovering and conquering new regions of the intellectual world. 20 To the success of such undertakings perhaps some degree of fortuitous happiness is necessary, which no man can promise or procure to himself; and therefore doubt and irresolution may be forgiven in him that ventures into the unexplored abysses of truth, and attempts to 25 find his way through the fluctuations of uncertainty, and the conflicts of contradiction. But when nothing more is required than to pursue a path already beaten, and to trample obstacles which others have demolished, why should any man so much distrust his 30 own intellect as to imagine himself unequal to the attempt?

It were to be wished that they who devote their lives to study would at once believe nothing too great for their attainment, and consider nothing as too little for 35 their regard; that they would extend their notice alike to science and to life, and unite some knowledge of the

present world to their acquaintance with past ages and remote events.

Nothing has so much exposed men of learning to contempt and ridicule as their ignorance of things which are known to all but themselves. Those who have been taught to consider the institutions of the schools as giving the last perfection to human abilities, are surprised to see men wrinkled with study, yet wanting to be instructed in the minute circumstances of propriety, or the necessary forms of daily transaction; and quickly shake off their reverence for modes of education which they find to produce no ability above the rest of mankind.

'Books,' says Bacon, 'can never teach the use of books.' The student must learn by commerce with mankind to reduce his speculations to practice, and accommodate his knowledge to the purposes of life.

It is too common for those who have been bred to scholastic professions, and passed much of their time in academies where nothing but learning confers honors, to disregard every other qualification, and to imagine that they shall find mankind ready to pay homage to their knowledge, and to crowd about them for instruction. They therefore step out from their cells into the open world with all the confidence of authority and dignity of importance; they look round about them at once with ignorance and scorn on a race of beings to whom they are equally unknown and equally contemptible, but whose manners they must imitate, and with whose opinions they must comply, if they desire to pass their time happily among them.

To lessen that disdain with which scholars are inclined to look on the common business of the world, and the unwillingness with which they condescend to learn what is not to be found in any system of philosophy, it may be necessary to consider, that, though admiration is excited by abstruse researches and remote discov-

eries, yet pleasure is not given, nor affection conciliated, but by softer accomplishments, and qualities more easily communicable to those about us. He that can only converse upon questions about which only a small part of mankind has knowledge sufficient to make them curious, must lose his days in unsocial silence, and live in the crowd of life without a companion. He that can only be useful on great occasions may die without exerting his abilities, and stand a helpless spectator of a thousand vexations which fret away happiness, and 10 which nothing is required to remove but a little dexterity of conduct and readiness of expedients.

No degree of knowledge attainable by man is able to set him above the want of hourly assistance, or to extinguish the desire of fond endearments and tender 15 officiousness; and therefore no one should think it unnecessary to learn those arts by which friendship may be gained. Kindness is preserved by a constant reciprocation of benefits or interchange of pleasures; but such benefits only can be bestowed, as others are capable to 20 receive, and such pleasures only imparted, as others are qualified to enjoy.

By this descent from the pinnacles of art no honor will be lost; for the condescensions of learning are always overpaid by gratitude. An elevated genius employed in little things, appears, to use the simile of Longinus, like the sun in his evening declination: he remits his splendor, but retains his magnitude, and pleases more though he dazzles less.

No. 145. TUESDAY, August 6, 1751

*Non, si priores Mæonius tenet  
Sedes Homerus, Pindaricæ latent,  
Cæque et Alcæi minaces,  
Stesichorique graves Camænæ.*—HOR. *Od.* 4. 9. 5-8.

What though the Muse her Homer thrones  
High above all the immortal quire;  
Nor Pindar's raptures she disowns,  
Nor hides the plaintive Cean lyre;  
Alcæus strikes the tyrant soul with dread,  
Nor yet is grave Stesichorus unread.—FRANCIS.

It is allowed that vocations and employments of least dignity are of the most apparent use; that the meanest artisan or manufacturer contributes more to the accommodation of life, than the profound scholar and argumentative theorist; and that the public would suffer less present inconvenience from the banishment of philosophers than from the extinction of any common trade.

Some have been so forcibly struck with this observation, that they have, in the first warmth of their discovery, thought it reasonable to alter the common distribution of dignity, and ventured to condemn mankind of universal ingratitude. For justice exacts that those by whom we are most benefited should be most honored. And what labor can be more useful than that which procures to families and communities those necessities which supply the wants of nature, or those conveniencies by which ease, security, and elegance are conferred?

This is one of the innumerable theories which the first attempt to reduce them into practice certainly destroys. If we estimate dignity by immediate usefulness, agriculture is undoubtedly the first and noblest science; yet we see the plough driven, the clod broken, the manure spread, the seeds scattered, and the harvest reaped, by men whom those that feed upon their industry will never be persuaded to admit into the same rank with heroes, or with sages; and who, after all the confessions which truth may extort in favor of

their occupation, must be content to fill up the lowest class of the commonwealth, to form the base of the pyramid of subordination, and lie buried in obscurity themselves, while they support all that is splendid, conspicuous, or exalted. 5

It will be found upon a closer inspection, that this part of the conduct of mankind is by no means contrary to reason or equity. Remuneratory honors are proportioned at once to the usefulness and difficulty of performances, and are properly adjusted by comparison of the mental and corporeal abilities which they appear to employ. That work, however necessary, which is carried on only by muscular strength and manual dexterity, is not of equal esteem, in the consideration of rational beings, with the tasks that exercise the intellectual powers, and require the active vigor of imagination, or the gradual and laborious investigations of reason. 15

The merit of all manual occupations seems to terminate in the inventor; and surely the first ages cannot be charged with ingratitude; since those who civilized barbarians, and taught them how to secure themselves from cold and hunger, were numbered amongst their deities. But these arts once discovered by philosophy, and facilitated by experience, are afterwards practised with very little assistance from the faculties of the soul; nor is any thing necessary to the regular discharge of these inferior duties, beyond that rude observation which the most sluggish intellect may practise, and that industry which the stimulations of necessity naturally enforce. 25 30

Yet though the refusal of statues and panegyric to those who employ only their hands and feet in the service of mankind may be easily justified, I am far from intending to incite the petulance of pride, to justify the superciliousness of grandeur, or to intercept any part of that tenderness and benevolence which, by 35

the privilege of their common nature, one man may claim from another.

That it would be neither wise nor equitable to discourage the husbandman, the laborer, the miner, or the smith, is generally granted; but there is another race of beings equally obscure and equally indigent, who, because their usefulness is less obvious to vulgar apprehensions, live unrewarded and die unpitied, and who have been long exposed to insult without a defender, and to censure without an apologist.

The authors of London were formerly computed by Swift at several thousands, and there is not any reason for suspecting that their number has decreased. Of these only a very few can be said to produce, or endeavor to produce, new ideas, to extend any principle of science, or gratify the imagination with any uncommon train of images or contexture of events; the rest, however laborious, however arrogant, can only be considered as the drudges of the pen, the manufacturers of literature, who have set up for authors, either with or without a regular initiation, and, like other artificers, have no other care than to deliver their tale of wares at the stated time.

It has been formerly imagined that he who intends the entertainment or instruction of others must feel in himself some peculiar impulse of genius; that he must watch the happy minute in which his natural fire is excited, in which his mind is elevated with nobler sentiments, enlightened with clearer views, and invigorated with stronger comprehension; that he must carefully select his thoughts and polish his expressions; and animate his efforts with the hope of raising a monument of learning, which neither time nor envy shall be able to destroy.

But the authors whom I am now endeavoring to recommend have been too long 'hackneyed in the ways of men' to indulge the chimerical ambition of im

mortality; they have seldom any claim to the trade of writing, but that they have tried some other without success; they perceive no particular summons to composition, except the sound of the clock; they have no other rule than the law or the fashion for admitting 5 their thoughts or rejecting them; and about the opinion of posterity they have little solicitude, for their productions are seldom intended to remain in the world longer than a week.

That such authors are not to be rewarded with praise 10 is evident, since nothing can be admired when it ceases to exist; but surely, though they cannot aspire to honor, they may be exempted from ignominy, and adopted in that order of men which deserves our kindness, though not our reverence. These papers of the day, the 15 *Ephemera* of learning, have uses more adequate to the purposes of common life than more pompous and durable volumes. If it is necessary for every man to be more acquainted with his contemporaries than with past generations, and to rather know the events which may 20 immediately affect his fortune or quiet, than the revolutions of ancient kingdoms, in which he has neither possessions nor expectations; if it be pleasing to hear of the preferment and dismissal of statesmen, the birth of heirs, and the marriage of beauties, the humble 25 author of journals and gazettes must be considered as a liberal dispenser of beneficial knowledge.

Even the abridger, compiler, and translator, though their labors cannot be ranked with those of the diurnal historiographer, yet must not be rashly doomed to anni- 30 hilation. Every size of readers requires a genius of correspondent capacity; some delight in abstracts and epitomes, because they want room in their memory for long details, and content themselves with effects, without inquiry after causes; some minds are overpowered 35 by splendor of sentiment, as some eyes are offended by a glaring light; such will gladly contemplate an

author in an humble imitation, as we look without pain upon the sun in the water.

As every writer has his use, every writer ought to have his patrons; and since no man, however high he may now stand, can be certain that he shall not be soon thrown down from his elevation by criticism or caprice, the common interest of learning requires that her sons should cease from intestine hostilities, and, instead of sacrificing each other in malice and contempt, endeavor to avert persecution from the meanest of their fraternity.

No. 154. SATURDAY, September 7, 1751

—*Tibi res antiquæ laudis et artis  
Ingredior, sanctos ausus recludere fontes.*

—VIRG. *Georg.* 2. 174, 5.

For thee my tuneful accents will I raise,  
And treat of arts disclos'd in ancient days;  
Once more unlock for thee the sacred spring.

—DRYDEN.

THE direction of Aristotle to those that study politics is, first to examine and understand what has been written by the ancients upon government; then to cast their eyes round upon the world, and consider by what causes the prosperity of communities is visibly influenced, and why some are worse, and others better administered.

The same method must be pursued by him who hopes to become eminent in any other part of knowledge. The first task is to search books, the next to contemplate nature. He must first possess himself of the intellectual treasures which the diligence of former ages has accumulated, and then endeavor to increase them by his own collections.

The mental disease of the present generation is impatience of study, contempt of the great masters of ancient wisdom, and a disposition to rely wholly upon unassisted genius and natural sagacity. The wits of these happy days have discovered a way to fame, which



the dull caution of our laborious ancestors durst never attempt; they cut the knots of sophistry, which it was formerly the business of years to untie, solve difficulties by sudden irradiations of intelligence, and comprehend long processes of argument by immediate intuition. 5

Men who have flattered themselves into this opinion of their own abilities, look down on all who waste their lives over books, as a race of inferior beings, condemned by nature to perpetual pupillage, and fruitlessly endeavoring to remedy their barrenness by incessant cultivation, 10 or succor their feebleness by subsidiary strength. They presume that none would be more industrious than they, if they were not more sensible of deficiencies; and readily conclude, that he who places no confidence in his own powers, owes his modesty only to his weak- 15 ness.

It is, however, certain, that no estimate is more in danger of erroneous calculations than those by which a man computes the force of his own genius. It generally happens at our entrance into the world, that, 20 by the natural attraction of similitude, we associate with men like ourselves, young, sprightly, and ignorant, and rate our accomplishments by comparison with theirs; when we have once obtained an acknowledged superiority over our acquaintances, imagination and desire easily 25 extend it over the rest of mankind, and if no accident forces us into new emulations, we grow old, and die in admiration of ourselves.

Vanity, thus confirmed in her dominion, readily listens to the voice of idleness, and soothes the slumber 30 of life with continual dreams of excellence and greatness. A man, elated by confidence in his natural vigor of fancy and sagacity of conjecture, soon concludes that he already possesses whatever toil and inquiry can confer. He then listens with eagerness to the wild objec- 35 tions which folly has raised against the common means of improvement; talks of the dark chaos of indigested

knowledge; describes the mischievous effects of heterogeneous sciences fermenting in the mind; relates the blunders of lettered ignorance; expatiates on the heroic merit of those who deviate from prescription, or shake off authority; and gives vent to the inflations of his heart by declaring that he owes nothing to pedants and universities.

All these pretensions, however confident, are very often vain. The laurels which superficial acuteness gains in triumphs over ignorance unsupported by vivacity, are observed by Locke to be lost, whenever real learning and rational diligence appear against her; the sallies of gaiety are soon repressed by calm confidence; and the artifices of subtilty are readily detected by those who, having carefully studied the question, are not easily confounded or surprised.

But, though the contemner of books had neither been deceived by others nor himself, and was really born with a genius surpassing the ordinary abilities of mankind; yet surely such gifts of Providence may be more properly urged as incitements to labor, than encouragements to negligence. He that neglects the culture of ground naturally fertile, is more shamefully culpable than he whose field would scarcely recompense his husbandry.

Cicero remarks, that not to know what has been transacted in former times, is to continue always a child. If no use is made of the labors of past ages, the world must remain always in the infancy of knowledge. The discoveries of every man must terminate in his own advantage, and the studies of every age be employed on questions which the past generation had discussed and determined. We may with as little reproach borrow science as manufactures from our ancestors; and it is as rational to live in caves till our own hands have erected a palace, as to reject all knowledge of architecture which our understandings will not supply.

To the strongest and quickest mind it is far easier to learn than to invent. The principles of arithmetic and geometry may be comprehended by a close attention in a few days; yet who can flatter himself that the study of a long life would have enabled him to discover them, 5 when he sees them yet unknown to so many nations, whom he cannot suppose less liberally endowed with natural reason than the Grecians or Egyptians?

Every science was thus far advanced towards perfection by the emulous diligence of contemporary students, 10 and the gradual discoveries of one age improving on another. Sometimes unexpected flashes of instruction were struck out by the fortuitous collision of happy incidents, or an involuntary concurrence of ideas, in which the philosopher to whom they happened had no 15 other merit than that of knowing their value, and transmitting, unclouded, to posterity, that light which had been kindled by causes out of his power. The happiness of these casual illuminations no man can promise to himself, because no endeavors can procure them; and 20 therefore, whatever be our abilities or application, we must submit to learn from others what perhaps would have lain hid forever from human penetration, had not some remote inquiry brought it to view; as treasures are thrown up by the plowman and the digger in the 25 rude exercise of their common occupations.

The man whose genius qualifies him for great undertakings, must at least be content to learn from books the present state of human knowledge; that he may not ascribe to himself the invention of arts generally known; 30 weary his attention with experiments of which the event has been long registered; and waste, in attempts which have already succeeded or miscarried, that time which might have been spent with usefulness and honor upon new undertakings. 35

But, though the study of books is necessary, it is not sufficient to constitute literary eminence. He that

wishes to be counted among the benefactors of posterity must add by his own toil to the acquisitions of his ancestors, and secure his memory from neglect by some valuable improvement. This can only be effected by  
5 looking out upon the wastes of the intellectual world, and extending the power of learning over regions yet undisciplined and barbarous; or by surveying more exactly her ancient dominions, and driving ignorance from the fortresses and retreats where she skulks undetected  
10 and undisturbed. Every science has its difficulties, which yet call for solution before we attempt new systems of knowledge; as every country has its forests and marshes, which it would be wise to cultivate and drain, before distant colonies are projected as a necessary discharge  
15 of the exuberance of inhabitants.

No man ever yet became great by imitation. Whatever hopes for the veneration of mankind must have invention in the design or the execution; either the effect must itself be new, or the means by which it is pro-  
20 duced. Either truths hitherto unknown must be discovered, or those which are already known enforced by stronger evidence, facilitated by clearer method, or elucidated by brighter illustrations.

Fame cannot spread wide or endure long that is not  
25 rooted in nature, and manured by art. That which hopes to resist the blast of malignity, and stand firm against the attacks of time, must contain in itself some original principle of growth. The reputation which arises from the detail or transposition of borrowed  
30 sentiments may spread for a while, like ivy on the rind of antiquity, but will be torn away by accident or contempt, and suffered to rot unheeded on the ground.

No. 169. TUESDAY, October 29, 1751

*Nec pluteum cædit, nec demorsos sapit ungues.*  
—PERSIUS, *Sat.* 1. 106.

No blood from bitten nails those poems drew;  
But churn'd, like spittle, from the lips they flew.  
—DRYDEN.

NATURAL historians assert that whatever is formed for long duration arrives slowly to its maturity. Thus the firmest timber is of tardy growth, and animals generally exceed each other in longevity, in proportion to the time between their conception and their birth. 5

The same observation may be extended to the offspring of the mind. Hasty compositions, however they please at first by flowery luxuriance, and spread in the sunshine of temporary favor, can seldom endure the change of seasons, but perish at the first blast of criticism, or frost of neglect. When Apelles was reproached with the paucity of his productions, and the incessant attention with which he retouched his pieces, he condescended to make no other answer than that 'he painted for perpetuity.' 15

No vanity can more justly incur contempt and indignation than that which boasts of negligence and hurry. For who can bear with patience the writer who claims such superiority to the rest of his species, as to imagine that mankind are at leisure for attention 20 to his extemporary sallies, and that posterity will reposit his casual effusions among the treasures of ancient wisdom?

Men have sometimes appeared of such transcendent abilities, that their slightest and most cursory performances excel all that labor and study can enable meaner intellects to compose; as there are regions of which the spontaneous products cannot be equalled in other soils by care and culture. But it is no less dangerous for any man to place himself in this rank of understanding,

and fancy that he is born to be illustrious without labor, than to omit the cares of husbandry, and expect from his ground the blossoms of Arabia.

The greatest part of those who congratulate themselves upon their intellectual dignity, and usurp the privileges of genius, are men whom only themselves would ever have marked out as enriched by uncommon liberalities of nature, or entitled to veneration and immortality on easy terms. This ardor of confidence is usually found among those who, having not enlarged their notions by books or conversation, are persuaded, by the partiality which we all feel in our own favor, that they have reached the summit of excellence, because they discover none higher than themselves; and who acquiesce in the first thoughts that occur, because their scantiness of knowledge allows them little choice, and the narrowness of their views affords them no glimpse of perfection, of that sublime idea which human industry has from the first ages been vainly toiling to approach. They see a little, and believe that there is nothing beyond their sphere of vision, as the Patuecos of Spain, who inhabited a small valley, conceived the surrounding mountains to be the boundaries of the world. In proportion as perfection is more distinctly conceived, the pleasure of contemplating our own performances will be lessened; it may therefore be observed, that they who most deserve praise are often afraid to decide in favor of their own performances; they know how much is still wanting to their completion, and wait with anxiety and terror the determination of the public. 'I please every one else,' says Tully, 'but never satisfy myself.'

It has often been inquired, why, notwithstanding the advances of latter ages in science, and the assistance which the infusion of so many new ideas has given us, we fall below the ancients in the art of composition. Some part of their superiority may be justly ascribed

to the graces of their language, from which the most polished of the present European tongues are nothing more than barbarous degenerations. Some advantage they might gain merely by priority, which put them in possession of the most natural sentiments, and left us 5 nothing but servile repetition or forced conceits. But the greater part of their praise seems to have been the just reward of modesty and labor. Their sense of human weakness confined them commonly to one study, which their knowledge of the extent of every science 10 engaged them to prosecute with indefatigable diligence.

Among the writers of antiquity I remember none except Statius who ventures to mention the speedy production of his writings, either as an extenuation of his faults, or a proof of his facility. Nor did Statius, 15 when he considered himself as a candidate for lasting reputation, think a closer attention unnecessary, but amidst all his pride and indigence, the two great hasteners of modern poems, employed twelve years upon the *Thebaid*, and thinks his claim to renown proportion- 20 ate to his labor.

*Thebais, multâ cruciata limâ,  
Tentat, audaci fide, Mantuanæ  
Gaudia famæ.*

Pollish'd with endless toil, my lays  
At length aspire to Mantuan praise.

Ovid indeed apologizes in his banishment for the im- 25 perfection of his letters, but mentions his want of leisure to polish them as an addition to his calamities; and was so far from imagining revisals and corrections unnecessary, that at his departure from Rome, he threw his *Metamorphoses* into the fire, lest he should be 30 disgraced by a book that he could not hope to finish.

It seems not often to have happened that the same writer aspired to reputation in verse and prose; and

of those few that attempted such diversity of excellence, I know not that even one succeeded. Contrary characters they never imagined a single mind able to support, and therefore no man is recorded to have undertaken 5 more than one kind of dramatic poetry.

What they had written they did not venture in their first fondness to thrust into the world, but, considering the impropriety of sending forth inconsiderately that which cannot be recalled, deferred the publication, if 10 not nine years, according to the direction of Horace, yet till their fancy was cooled after the raptures of invention, and the glare of novelty had ceased to dazzle the judgment.

There were in those days no weekly or diurnal writers; 15 'multa dies, et multa litura'—'much time and manyasures'—were considered as indispensable requisites; and that no other method of attaining lasting praise has been yet discovered, may be conjectured from the blotted manuscripts of Milton now remaining, and from the 20 tardy emission of Pope's compositions, delayed more than once till the incidents to which they alluded were forgotten, till his enemies were secure from his satire, and, what to an honest mind must be more painful, his friends were deaf to his encomiums.

25 To him whose eagerness of praise hurries his productions soon into the light many imperfections are unavoidable, even where the mind furnishes the materials, as well as regulates their disposition, and nothing depends upon search or information. Delay opens 30 new veins of thought, the subject dismissed for a time appears with a new train of dependent images, the accidents of reading or conversation supply new ornaments or allusions, or mere intermission of the fatigue of thinking enables the mind to collect new force, and 35 make new excursions. But all those benefits come too late for him who, when he was weary with labor, snatched at the recompense, and gave his work to his



friends and his enemies, as soon as impatience and pride persuaded him to conclude it.

One of the most pernicious effects of haste is obscurity. He that teems with a quick succession of ideas, and perceives how one sentiment produces another, easily 5 believes that he can clearly express what he so strongly comprehends; he seldom suspects his thoughts of embarrassment, while he preserves in his own memory the series of connection, or his diction of ambiguity, while only one sense is present to his mind. Yet if 10 he has been employed on an abstruse or complicated argument, he will find, when he has awhile withdrawn his mind, and returns as a new reader to his work, that he has only a conjectural glimpse of his own meaning, and that to explain it to those whom he desires 15 to instruct, he must open his sentiments, disentangle his method, and alter his arrangement.

Authors and lovers always suffer some infatuation from which only absence can set them free; and every man ought to restore himself to the full exercise of his 20 judgment, before he does that which he cannot do improperly without injuring his honor and his quiet.

No. 170. SATURDAY, November 2, 1751

*Confiteor, si quid prodest delicta fateri.*

—OVID, *Amores* 2. 3. 3.

I grant the charge; forgive the fault confess'd.

#### TO THE RAMBLER

SIR:

I AM one of those beings from whom many that melt at the sight of all other misery, think it meritorious 25 to withhold relief; one whom the rigor of virtuous indignation dooms to suffer without complaint, and perish without regard; and whom I myself have formerly insulted in the pride of reputation and security of innocence.

30

I am of a good family, but my father was burdened

with more children than he could decently support. A wealthy relation, as he travelled from London to his country-seat, condescending to make him a visit, was touched with compassion of his narrow fortune, and  
5 resolved to ease him of part of his charge, by taking the care of a child upon himself. Distress on one side, and ambition on the other, were too powerful for parental fondness, and the little family passed in review before him, that he might make his choice. I was then  
10 ten years old, and, without knowing for what purpose I was called to my great cousin, endeavored to recommend myself by my best courtesy, sung him my prettiest song, told the last story that I had read, and so much endeared myself by my innocence, that he de-  
15 clared his resolution to adopt me, and to educate me with his own daughters.

My parents felt the common struggles at the thought of parting, and 'some natural tears they dropp'd, but wiped them soon.' They considered, not without that  
20 false estimation of the value of wealth which poverty long continued always produces, that I was raised to higher rank than they could give me, and to hopes of more ample fortune than they could bequeath. My mother sold some of her ornaments to dress me in such  
25 a manner as might secure me from contempt at my first arrival; and when she dismissed me, pressed me to her bosom with an embrace that I still feel, gave me some precepts of piety, which, however neglected, I have not forgotten, and uttered prayers for my final  
30 happiness, of which I have not yet ceased to hope that they will at last be granted.

My sisters envied my new finery, and seemed not much to regret our separation; my father conducted me to the stage-coach with a kind of cheerful tenderness;  
85 and in a very short time I was transported to splendid apartments, and a luxurious table, and grew familiar to show, noise, and gaiety.

In three years my mother died, having implored a blessing on her family with her last breath. I had little opportunity to indulge a sorrow which there was none to partake with me, and therefore soon ceased to reflect much upon my loss. My father turned all his care upon 5 his other children, whom some fortunate adventures and unexpected legacies enabled him, when he died four years after my mother, to leave in a condition above their expectations.

I should have shared the increase of his fortune, and 10 had once a portion assigned me in his will; but my cousin assuring him that all care for me was needless, since he had resolved to place me happily in the world, directed him to divide my part amongst my sisters.

Thus I was thrown upon dependence without re- 15 source. Being now at an age in which young women are initiated into company, I was no longer to be supported in my former character but at considerable expense; so that partly lest I should waste money, and partly lest my appearance might draw too many com- 20 pliments and assiduities, I was insensibly degraded from my equality, and enjoyed few privileges above the head servant but that of receiving no wages.

I felt every indignity, but knew that resentment would precipitate my fall. I therefore endeavored to con- 25 tinue my importance by little services and active officiousness, and, for a time, preserved myself from neglect, by withdrawing all pretenses to competition, and studying to please rather than to shine. But my interest, notwithstanding this expedient, hourly declined, 30 and my cousin's favorite maid began to exchange repartees with me, and consult me about the alterations of a cast gown.

I was now completely depressed; and, though I had seen mankind enough to know the necessity of outward 35 cheerfulness, I often withdrew to my chamber to vent my grief, or turn my condition in my mind, and ex-

amine by what means I might escape from perpetual mortification. At last my schemes and sorrows were interrupted by a sudden change of my relation's behavior, who one day took an occasion, when we were  
5 left together in a room, to bid me suffer myself no longer to be insulted, but assume the place which he always intended me to hold in the family. He assured me that his wife's preference of her own daughters should never hurt me; and, accompanying his profes-  
10 sions with a purse of gold, ordered me to bespeak a rich suit at the mercer's, and to apply privately to him for money when I wanted it, and insinuate that my other friends supplied me, which he would take care to confirm.

15 By this stratagem, which I did not then understand, he filled me with tenderness and gratitude, compelled me to repose on him as my only support, and produced a necessity of private conversation. He often appointed interviews at the house of an acquaintance, and some-  
20 times called on me with a coach, and carried me abroad. My sense of his favor, and the desire of retaining it, disposed me to unlimited complaisance; and, though I saw his kindness grow every day more fond, I did not suffer any suspicion to enter my thoughts. At  
25 last the wretch took advantage of the familiarity which he enjoyed as my relation, and the submission which he exacted as my benefactor, to complete the ruin of an orphan, whom his own promises had made indigent, whom his indulgence had melted, and his authority sub-  
30 dued.

I know not why it should afford subject of exultation to overpower on any terms the resolution, or surprise the caution of a girl; but of all the boasters that deck themselves in the spoils of innocence and beauty, they  
85 surely have the least pretensions to triumph who submit to owe their success to some casual influence. They neither employ the graces of fancy, nor the force of

understanding, in their attempts; they cannot please their vanity with the art of their approaches, the delicacy of their adulations, the elegance of their address, or the efficacy of their eloquence; nor applaud themselves as possessed of any qualities by which affection 5 is attracted. They surmount no obstacles, they defeat no rivals, but attack only those who cannot resist, and are often content to possess the body, without any solicitude to gain the heart.

Many of those despicable wretches does my present 10 acquaintance with infamy and wickedness enable me to number among the heroes of debauchery; reptiles whom their own servants would have despised, had they not been their servants, and with whom beggary would have disdained intercourse, had she not been allured by 15 hopes of relief. Many of the beings which are now rioting in taverns, or shivering in the streets, have been corrupted, not by arts of gallantry which stole gradually upon the affections and laid prudence asleep, but by the fear of losing benefits which were never intended, 20 or of incurring resentment which they could not escape; some have been frightened by masters, and some awed by guardians into ruin.

Our crime had its usual consequence, and he soon perceived that I could not long continue in his family. 25 I was distracted at the thought of the reproach which I now believed inevitable. He comforted me with hopes of eluding all discovery, and often upbraided me with the anxiety which perhaps none but himself saw in my countenance; but at last mingled his assurances of 30 protection and maintenance with menaces of total desertion, if in the moments of perturbation I should suffer his secret to escape, or endeavor to throw on him any part of my infamy.

Thus passed the dismal hours, till my retreat could 35 no longer be delayed. It was pretended that my relations had sent for me to a distant county, and I en-

tered upon a state which shall be described in my next letter.

I am, &c.

MISELLA.

No. 171. TUESDAY, November 5, 1751 .

*Tædet cali convexa tueri.*—VIRG. *Æn.* 4. 451.

Dark is the ~~sun~~, and loathsome is the day.

TO THE RAMBLER

SIR:

5 MISELLA now sits down to continue her narrative. I am convinced that nothing would more powerfully preserve youth from irregularity, or guard inexperience from seduction, than a just description of the condition into which the wanton plunges herself, and therefore  
10 hope that my letter may be a sufficient antidote to my example.

After the distraction, hesitation, and delays which the timidity of guilt naturally produces, I was removed to lodgings in a distant part of the town, under one  
15 of the characters commonly assumed upon such occasions. Here being by my circumstances condemned to solitude, I passed most of my hours in bitterness and anguish. The conversation of the people with whom I was placed was not at all capable of engaging my at-  
20 tention, or dispossessing the reigning ideas. The books which I carried to my retreat were such as heightened my abhorrence of myself; for I was not so far abandoned as to sink voluntarily into corruption, or endeavor to conceal from my own mind the enormity of  
25 my crime.

My relation remitted none of his fondness, but visited me so often, that I was sometimes afraid lest his assiduity should expose him to suspicion. Whenever he came he found me weeping, and was therefore less  
30 delightfully entertained than he expected. After fre-

quent expostulations upon the unreasonableness of my sorrow, and innumerable protestations of everlasting regard, he at last found that I was more affected with the loss of my innocence, than the danger of my fame, and that he might not be disturbed by my remorse, began to lull my conscience with the opiates of irreligion. His arguments were such as my course of life has since exposed me often to the necessity of hearing, vulgar, empty, and fallacious; yet they at first confounded me by their novelty, filled me with doubt and perplexity, and interrupted that peace which I began to feel from the sincerity of my repentance, without substituting any other support. I listened awhile to his impious gabble, but its influence was soon overpowered by natural reason and early education, and the convictions which this new attempt gave me of his baseness completed my abhorrence. I have heard of barbarians, who, when tempests drive ships upon their coast, decoy them to the rocks that they may plunder their lading, and have always thought that wretches, thus merciless in their depredations ought to be destroyed by a general insurrection of all social beings; yet how light is this guilt to the crime of him who, in the agitations of remorse, cuts away the anchor of piety, and, when he has drawn aside credulity from the paths of virtue, hides the light of heaven which would direct her to return. I had hitherto considered him as a man equally betrayed with myself by the concurrence of appetite and opportunity; but I now saw with horror that he was contriving to perpetuate his gratification, and was desirous to fit me to his purpose by complete and radical corruption.

To escape, however, was not yet in my power. I could support the expenses of my condition only by the continuance of his favor. He provided all that was necessary, and in a few weeks congratulated me upon my escape from the danger which we had both

expected with so much anxiety. I then began to remind him of his promise to restore me with my fame uninjured to the world. He promised me in general terms, that nothing should be wanting which his power could add to my happiness, but forbore to release me from my confinement. I knew how much my reception in the world depended upon my speedy return, and was therefore outrageously impatient of his delays, which I now perceived to be only artifices of lewdness. He told me at last, with an appearance of sorrow, that all hopes of restoration to my former state were forever precluded; that chance had discovered my secret, and malice divulged it; and that nothing now remained, but to seek a retreat more private, where curiosity or hatred could never find us.

The rage, anguish, and resentment, which I felt at this account are not to be expressed. I was in so much dread of reproach and infamy, which he represented as pursuing me with full cry, that I yielded myself implicitly to his disposal, and was removed, with a thousand studied precautions, through by-ways and dark passages, to another house, where I harassed him with perpetual solicitations for a small annuity that might enable me to live in the country in obscurity and innocence.

This demand he at first evaded with ardent professions, but in time appeared offended at my importunity and distrust; and having one day endeavored to soothe me with uncommon expressions of tenderness, when he found my discontent immovable, left me with some inarticulate murmurs of anger. I was pleased that he was at last roused to sensibility, and expecting that at his next visit he would comply with my request, lived with great tranquillity upon the money in my hands, and was so much pleased with this pause of persecution, that I did not reflect how much his absence had exceeded the usual intervals, till I was alarmed



with the danger of wanting subsistence. I then suddenly contracted my expenses, but was unwilling to supplicate for assistance. Necessity, however, soon overcame my modesty or my pride, and I applied to him by a letter, but had no answer. I writ in terms more pressing, but without effect. I then sent an agent to inquire after him, who informed me that he had quitted his house, and was gone with his family to reside for some time upon his estate in Ireland.

However shocked at this abrupt departure, I was yet 10 unwilling to believe that he could wholly abandon me, and therefore, by the sale of my clothes I supported myself, expecting that every post would bring me relief. Thus I passed seven months between hope and dejection, in a gradual approach to poverty and distress, emaciated 15 with discontent, and bewildered with uncertainty. At last my landlady, after many hints of the necessity of a new lover, took the opportunity of my absence to search my boxes, and missing some of my apparel, seized the remainder for rent, and led me to the door. 20

To remonstrate against legal cruelty was vain; to supplicate obdurate brutality was hopeless. I went away I knew not whither, and wandered about without any settled purpose, unacquainted with the usual expedients of misery, unqualified for laborious offices, 25 afraid to meet an eye that had seen me before, and hopeless of relief from those who were strangers to my former condition. Night came on in the midst of my distraction, and I still continued to wander till the menaces of the watch obliged me to shelter myself 30 in a covered passage.

Next day I procured a lodging in the backward garret of a mean house, and employed my landlady to inquire for a service. My applications were generally rejected for want of a character. At length I was received at 35 a draper's, but when it was known to my mistress that I had only one gown, and that of silk, she was of opinion

that I looked like a thief, and without warning hurried me away. I then tried to support myself by my needle; and, by my landlady's recommendation, obtained a little work from a shop, and for three weeks lived without repining; but when my punctuality had gained me so much reputation, that I was trusted to make up a head of some value, one of my fellow-lodgers stole the lace, and I was obliged to fly from a prosecution.

Thus driven again into the streets, I lived upon the least that could support me, and at night accommodated myself under pent-houses as well as I could. At length I became absolutely penniless, and having strolled all day without sustenance, was, at the close of evening, accosted by an elderly man with an invitation to a tavern. I refused him with hesitation; he seized me by the hand, and drew me into a neighboring house, where, when he saw my face pale with hunger, and my eyes swelling with tears, he spurned me from him, and bade me cant and whine in some other place; he for his part would take care of his pockets.

I still continued to stand in the way, having scarcely strength to walk further, when another soon addressed me in the same manner. When he saw the same tokens of calamity, he considered that I might be obtained at a cheap rate, and therefore quickly made overtures, which I had no longer firmness to reject. By this man I was maintained four months in penurious wickedness, and then abandoned to my former condition, from which I was delivered by another keeper.

In this abject state I have now passed four years, the drudge of extortion and the sport of drunkenness; sometimes the property of one man, and sometimes the common prey of accidental lewdness; at one time tricked up for sale by the mistress of a brothel, at another begging in the streets to be relieved from hunger by wickedness; without any hope in the day but of finding some whom folly or excess may expose to my allure-

ments, and without any reflections at night, but such as guilt and terror impress upon me.

If those who pass their days in plenty and security could visit for an hour the dismal receptacles to which the prostitute retires from her nocturnal excursions, and see the wretches that lie crowded together, mad with intemperance, ghastly with famine, nauseous with filth, and noisome with disease; it would not be easy for any degree of abhorrence to harden them against compassion, or to repress the desire which they must immediately 10 feel to rescue such numbers of human beings from a state so dreadful.

It is said that in France they annually evacuate their streets, and ship their prostitutes and vagabonds to their colonies. If the women that infest this city had the 15 same opportunity of escaping from their miseries, I believe very little force would be necessary; for who among them can dread any change? Many of us indeed are wholly unqualified for any but the most servile employments, and those perhaps would require the care 20 of a magistrate to hinder them from following the same practices in another country; but others are only precluded by infamy from reformation, and would gladly be delivered on any terms from the necessity of guilt, and the tyranny of chance. No place but a populous 25 city can afford opportunities for open prostitution; and where the eye of justice can attend to individuals, those who cannot be made good may be restrained from mischief. For my part, I should exult at the privilege of banishment, and think myself happy in any region 30 that should restore me once again to honesty and peace.

I am, Sir, &c.

MISELLA.

No. 173. TUESDAY, November 12, 1751

*Quò virtus, quò ferat error?*

—HOR. *Art of Poetry* 308.

Now say, where virtue stops, and vice begins.

As any action or posture, long continued, will distort and disfigure the limbs; so the mind likewise is crippled and contracted by perpetual application to the same set of ideas. It is easy to guess the trade of an artisan by his knees, his fingers, or his shoulders; and there are few among men of the more liberal professions, whose minds do not carry the brand of their calling, or whose conversation does not quickly discover to what class of the community they belong.

10 These peculiarities have been of great use in the general hostility which every part of mankind exercises against the rest, to furnish insults and sarcasms. Every art has its dialect, uncouth and ungrateful to all whom custom has not reconciled to its sound, and which there-  
15 fore becomes ridiculous by a slight misapplication or unnecessary repetition.

The general reproach with which ignorance revenges the superciliousness of learning is that of pedantry; a censure which every man incurs who has at any time  
20 the misfortune to talk to those who cannot understand him, and by which the modest and timorous are sometimes frightened from the display of their acquisitions and the exertion of their powers.

The name of a pedant is so formidable to young men  
25 when they first sally from their colleges, and is so liberally scattered by those who mean to boast their elegance of education, easiness of manners, and knowledge of the world, that it seems to require particular consideration; since, perhaps, if it were once under-  
30 stood, many a heart might be freed from painful apprehensions, and many a tongue delivered from restraint.

Pedantry is the unseasonable ostentation of learning. It may be discovered either in the choice of a subject, or in the manner of treating it. He is undoubtedly guilty of pedantry, who, when he has made himself master of some abstruse and uncultivated part of knowledge, obtrudes his remarks and discoveries upon those whom he believes unable to judge of his proficiency, and from whom, as he cannot fear contradiction, he cannot properly expect applause.

To this error the student is sometimes betrayed by the natural recurrence of the mind to its common employment, by the pleasure which every man receives from the recollection of pleasing images, and the desire of dwelling upon topics on which he knows himself able to speak with justness. But because we are seldom so far prejudiced in favor of each other, as to search out for palliations, this failure of politeness is imputed always to vanity; and the harmless collegiate, who, perhaps, intended entertainment and instruction, or at worst only spoke without sufficient reflection upon the character of his hearers, is censured as arrogant or overbearing, and eager to extend his renown, in contempt of the convenience of society and the laws of conversation.

All discourse of which others cannot partake is not only an irksome usurpation of the time devoted to pleasure and entertainment, but, what never fails to excite very keen resentment, an insolent assertion of superiority, and a triumph over less enlightened understandings. The pedant is, therefore, not only heard with weariness, but malignity; and those who conceive themselves insulted by his knowledge, never fail to tell with acrimony how injudiciously it was exerted.

To avoid this dangerous imputation, scholars sometimes divest themselves with too much haste of their academical formality, and in their endeavors to accommodate their notions and their style to common con-

ceptions, talk rather of any thing than of that which they understand, and sink into insipidity of sentiment and meanness of expression.

There prevails among men of letters an opinion that all appearance of science is particularly hateful to women; and that therefore whoever desires to be well received in female assemblies must qualify himself by a total rejection of all that is serious, rational, or important; must consider argument or criticism as perpetually interdicted; and devote all his attention to trifles, and all his eloquence to compliment.

Students often form their notions of the present generation from the writings of the past, and are not very early informed of those changes which the gradual diffusion of knowledge, or the sudden caprice of fashion, produces in the world. Whatever might be the state of female literature in the last century, there is now no longer any danger lest the scholar should want an adequate audience at the tea-table; and whoever thinks it necessary to regulate his conversation by antiquated rules will be rather despised for his futility than caressed for his politeness.

To talk intentionally in a manner above the comprehension of those whom we address, is unquestionable pedantry; but surely complaisance requires that no man should, without proof, conclude his company incapable of following him to the highest elevation of his fancy, or the utmost extent of his knowledge. It is always safer to err in favor of others than of ourselves, and therefore we seldom hazard much by endeavoring to excel.

It ought at least to be the care of learning, when she quits her exaltation, to descend with dignity. Nothing is more despicable than the airiness and jocularly of a man bred to severe science and solitary meditation. To trifle agreeably is a secret which schools cannot impart; that gay negligence and vivacious levity which

charm down resistance wherever they appear, are never attainable by him who, having spent his first years among the dust of libraries, enters late into the gay world with an unpliant attention and established habits.

It is observed in the panegyric on Fabricius the mechanist, that, though forced by public employments into mingled conversation, he never lost the modesty and seriousness of the convent, nor drew ridicule upon himself by an affected imitation of fashionable life. To the same praise every man devoted to learning ought to aspire. If he attempts the softer arts of pleasing, and endeavors to learn the graceful bow and the familiar embrace, the insinuating accent and the general smile, he will lose the respect due to the character of learning, without arriving at the envied honor of doing any thing with elegance and facility.

Theophrastus was discovered not to be a native of Athens, by so strict an adherence to the Attic dialect as showed that he had learned it not by custom, but by rule. A man not early formed to habitual elegance betrays in like manner the effects of his education, by an unnecessary anxiety of behavior. It is as possible to become pedantic by fear of pedantry, as to be troublesome by ill-timed civility. There is no kind of impertinence more justly censurable, than his who is always laboring to level thoughts to intellects higher than his own; who apologizes for every word which his own narrowness of converse inclines him to think unusual; keeps the exuberance of his faculties under visible restraint; is solicitous to anticipate inquiries by needless explanations; and endeavors to shade his own abilities, lest weak eyes should be dazzled with their lustre.

No. 188. SATURDAY, January 4, 1752

—*Si te colo, Sexte, non amabo.*

—MART., *Epig.* 2. 55. 3.

The more I honor thee, the less I love.

NONE of the desires dictated by vanity is more general, or less blameable, than that of being distinguished for the arts of conversation. Other accomplishments may be possessed without opportunity of exerting them, or 5 wanted without danger that the defect can often be remarked; but as no man can live otherwise than in an hermitage without hourly pleasure or vexation from the fondness or neglect of those about him, the faculty of giving pleasure is of continual use. Few are more 10 frequently envied than those who have the power of forcing attention wherever they come, whose entrance is considered as a promise of felicity, and whose departure is lamented, like the recess of the sun from northern climates, as a privation of all that enlivens fancy, or 15 inspirits gaiety.

It is apparent that to excellence in this valuable art some peculiar qualifications are necessary; for every one's experience will inform him that the pleasure which men are able to give in conversation holds no stated 20 proportion to their knowledge or their virtue. Many find their way to the tables and the parties of those who never consider them as of the least importance in any other place; we have all, at one time or other, been content to love those whom we could not esteem, 25 and been persuaded to try the dangerous experiment of admitting him for a companion whom we knew to be too ignorant for a counsellor, and too treacherous for a friend.

I question whether some abatement of character is 30 not necessary to general acceptance. Few spend their time with much satisfaction under the eye of uncontestable superiority; and therefore, among those whose



presence is courted at assemblies of jollity there are seldom found men eminently distinguished for powers or acquisitions. The wit whose vivacity condemns slower tongues to silence, the scholar whose knowledge allows no man to fancy that he instructs him, the critic who suffers no fallacy to pass undetected, and the reasoner who condemns the idle to thought, and the negligent to attention, are generally praised and feared, revered and avoided.

He that would please must rarely aim at such excellence as depresses his hearers in their own opinion, or debars them from the hope of contributing reciprocally to the entertainment of the company. Merriment, extorted by sallies of imagination, sprightliness of remark, or quickness of reply, is too often what the Latins call the Sardinian laughter, a distortion of the face without gladness of heart.

For this reason, no style of conversation is more extensively acceptable than the narrative. He who has stored his memory with slight anecdotes, private incidents, and personal peculiarities, seldom fails to find his audience favorable. Almost every man listens with eagerness to contemporary history; for almost every man has some real or imaginary connection with a celebrated character; some desire to advance or oppose a rising name. Vanity often coöperates with curiosity. He that is a hearer in one place, qualifies himself to become a speaker in another; for though he cannot comprehend a series of argument, or transport the volatile spirit of wit without evaporation, he yet thinks himself able to treasure up the various incidents of a story, and pleases his hopes with the information which he shall give to some inferior society.

Narratives are for the most part heard without envy, because they are not supposed to imply any intellectual qualities above the common rate. To be acquainted with facts not yet echoed by plebeian mouths, may happen to

one man as well as to another; and to relate them when they are known, has in appearance so little difficulty, that every one concludes himself equal to the task.

But it is not easy, and in some situations of life not possible, to accumulate such a stock of materials as may support the expense of continual narration; and it frequently happens, that they who attempt this method of ingratiating themselves, please only at the first interview; and, for want of new supplies of intelligence, wear out their stories by continual repetition.

There would be, therefore, little hope of obtaining the praise of a good companion, were it not to be gained by more compendious methods; but such is the kindness of mankind to all, except those who aspire to real merit and rational dignity, that every understanding may find some way to excite benevolence; and whoever is not envied may learn the art of procuring love. We are willing to be pleased, but are not willing to admire; we favor the mirth or officiousness that solicits our regard, but oppose the worth or spirit that enforces it.

The first place among those that please, because they desire only to please, is due to the *merry fellow*, whose laugh is loud, and whose voice is strong; who is ready to echo every jest with obstreperous approbation, and countenance every frolic with vociferations of applause. It is not necessary to a merry fellow to have in himself any fund of jocularities, or force of conception; it is sufficient that he always appears in the highest exaltation of gladness, for the greater part of mankind are gay or serious by infection, and follow without resistance the attraction of example.

Next to the merry fellow is the *good-natured man*, a being generally without benevolence, or any other virtue, than such as indolence and insensibility confer. The characteristic of a good-natured man is to bear a joke; to sit unmoved and unaffected amidst noise and turbulence, profaneness and obscenity; to hear every tale

without contradiction; to endure insult without reply; and to follow the stream of folly, whatever course it shall happen to take. The good-natured man is commonly the darling of the petty wits, with whom they exercise themselves in the rudiments of raillery; for he never takes advantage of failings, nor disconcerts a puny satirist with unexpected sarcasms; but while the glass continues to circulate, contentedly bears the expense of uninterrupted laughter, and retires rejoicing at his own importance. 10

The modest man is a companion of a yet lower rank, whose only power of giving pleasure is not to interrupt it. The modest man satisfies himself with peaceful silence, which all his companions are candid enough to consider as proceeding not from inability to speak, 15 but willingness to hear.

Many, without being able to attain any general character of excellence, have some single art of entertainment which serves them as a passport through the world. One I have known for fifteen years the darling 20 of a weekly club, because every night, precisely at eleven, he begins his favorite song, and during the vocal performance, by corresponding motions of his hand, chalks out a giant upon the wall. Another has endeared himself to a long succession of acquaintances 25 by sitting among them with his wig reversed; another by contriving to smut the nose of any stranger who was to be initiated in the club; another by purring like a cat, and then pretending to be frightened; and another by yelping like a hound, and calling to the drawers to 30 drive out the dog.

Such are the arts by which cheerfulness is promoted, and sometimes friendship established; arts, which those who despise them should not rigorously blame, except when they are practised at the expense of innocence; 35 for it is always necessary to be loved, but not always necessary to be revered.

No. 191. TUESDAY, January 14, 1752

*Cercus in vitium flecti, monitoribus asper.*

—HOR. *Art of Poetry* 163.

The youth——

Yielding like wax, th' impressive folly bears;

Rough to reproof, and slow to future cares.—FRANCIS.

TO THE RAMBLER

DEAR MR. RAMBLER:

I HAVE been four days confined to my chamber by a cold, which has already kept me from three plays, nine sales, five shows, and six card-tables, and put me seven-  
5 teen visits behindhand; and the doctor tells my mamma, that if I fret and cry, it will settle in my head, and I shall not be fit to be seen these six weeks. But, dear Mr. Rambler, how can I help it? At this very time Melissa is dancing with the prettiest gentleman; she  
10 will breakfast with him to-morrow, and then run to two auctions, and hear compliments, and have presents; then she will be dressed, and visit, and get a ticket to the play; then go to cards and win, and come home with two flambeaux before her chair. Dear Mr. Rambler,  
15 who can bear it?

My aunt has just brought me a bundle of your papers for my amusement. She says, you are a philosopher, and will teach me to moderate my desires, and look upon the world with indifference. But, dear sir, I do not  
20 wish, nor intend, to moderate my desires, nor can I think it proper to look upon the world with indifference, till the world looks with indifference on me. I have been forced, however, to sit this morning a whole quarter of an hour with your paper before my face; but just  
25 as my aunt came in, Phyllida had brought me a letter from Mr. Trip, which I put within the leaves; and read about 'absence' and 'inconsolableness,' and 'ardor,' and 'irresistible passion,' and 'eternal constancy,' while my

aunt imagined that I was puzzling myself with your philosophy, and often cried out, when she saw me look confused, 'If there is any word that you do not understand, child, I will explain it.'

Dear soul! How old people that think themselves wise 5 may be imposed upon! But it is fit that they should take their turn, for I am sure, while they can keep poor girls close in the nursery, they tyrannize over us in a very shameful manner, and fill our imaginations with tales of terror, only to make us live in quiet sub-10 jection, and fancy that we can never be safe but by their protection.

I have a mamma and two aunts, who have all been formerly celebrated for wit and beauty, and are still generally admired by those that value themselves upon 15 their understanding, and love to talk of vice and virtue, nature and simplicity, and beauty and propriety; but if there was not some hope of meeting me, scarcely a creature would come near them that wears a fashionable coat. These ladies, Mr. Rambler, have had me under 20 their government fifteen years and a half, and have all that time been endeavoring to deceive me by such representations of life as I now find not to be true; but I know not whether I ought to impute them to ignorance or malice, as it is possible the world may be much 25 changed since they mingled in general conversation.

Being desirous that I should love books, they told me that nothing but knowledge could make me an agreeable companion to men of sense, or qualify me to distinguish the superficial glitter of vanity from the solid merit of 30 understanding; and that a habit of reading would enable me to fill up the vacuities of life without the help of silly or dangerous amusements, and preserve me from the snares of idleness and the inroads of temptation.

But their principal intention was to make me afraid 35 of men; in which they succeeded so well for a time, that I durst not look in their faces, or be left alone with

them in a parlor; for they made me fancy that no man ever spoke but to deceive, or looked but to allure; that the girl who suffered him that had once squeezed her hand, to approach her a second time, was on the  
5 brink of ruin; and that she who answered a billet, without consulting her relations, gave love such power over her, that she would certainly become either poor or infamous.

From the time that my leading-strings were taken  
10 off, I scarce heard any mention of my beauty but from the milliner, the mantua-maker, and my own maid; for my mamma never said more, when she heard me commended, but 'The girl is very well,' and then endeavored to divert my attention by some inquiry after  
15 my needle, or my book.

It is now three months since I have been suffered to pay and receive visits, to dance at public assemblies, to have a place kept for me in the boxes, and to play at Lady Racket's rout; and you may easily imagine what  
20 I think of those who have so long cheated me with false expectations, disturbed me with fictitious terrors, and concealed from me all that I have found to make the happiness of woman.

I am so far from perceiving the usefulness or necessity  
25 of books, that if I had not dropped all pretensions to learning, I should have lost Mr. Trip, whom I once frightened into another box, by retailing some of Dryden's remarks upon a tragedy; for Mr. Trip declares that he hates nothing like hard words, and, I am sure, there  
30 is not a better partner to be found; his very walk is a dance. I have talked once or twice among ladies about principles and ideas, but they put their fans before their faces, and told me I was too wise for them, who for their part never pretended to read any thing  
35 but the play-bill, and then asked me the price of my best head.

Those vacancies of time which are to be filled up with

books I have never yet obtained; for, consider, Mr. Rambler, I go to bed late, and therefore cannot rise early; as soon as I am up, I dress for the gardens; then walk in the park; then always go to some sale or show, or entertainment at the little theatre; then 5 must be dressed for dinner; then must pay my visits; then walk in the park; then hurry to the play; and from thence to the card-table. This is the general course of the day, when there happens nothing extraordinary; but sometimes I ramble into the country, and come 10 back again to a ball; sometimes I am engaged for a whole day and part of the night. If, at any time, I can gain an hour by not being at home, I have so many things to do, so many orders to give to the milliner, so many alterations to make in my clothes, so many 15 visitants' names to read over, so many invitations to accept or refuse, so many cards to write, and so many fashions to consider, that I am lost in confusion, forced at last to let in company or step into my chair, and leave half my affairs to the direction of my 20 maid.

This is the round of my day; and when shall I either stop my course, or so change it as to want a book? I suppose it cannot be imagined, that any of these diversions will soon be at an end. There will always 25 be gardens, and a park, and auctions, and shows, and playhouses, and cards; visits will always be paid, and clothes always be worn; and how can I have time unemployed upon my hands?

But I am most at a loss to guess for what purpose 30 they related such tragic stories of the cruelty, perfidy, and artifices of men, who, if they ever were so malicious and destructive, have certainly now reformed their manners. I have not, since my entrance into the world, found one who does not profess himself devoted to 35 my service, and ready to live or die as I shall command him. They are so far from intending to hurt me, that

their only contention is, who shall be allowed most closely to attend, and most frequently to treat me. When different places of entertainment or schemes of pleasure are mentioned, I can see the eye sparkle and the cheeks glow of him whose proposals obtain my approbation; he then leads me off in triumph, adores my condescension, and congratulates himself that he has lived to the hour of felicity. Are these, Mr. Rambler, creatures to be feared? Is it likely that any injury will be done me by those who can enjoy life only while I favor them with my presence?

As little reason can I yet find to suspect them of stratagems and fraud. When I play at cards, they never take advantage of my mistakes, nor exact from me a rigorous observation of the game. Even Mr. Shuffle, a grave gentleman, who has daughters older than myself, plays with me so negligently, that I am sometimes inclined to believe he loses his money by design, and yet he is so fond of play, that he says he will one day take me to his house in the country, that we may try by ourselves who can conquer. I have not yet promised him; but when the town grows a little empty, I shall think upon it, for I want some trinkets, like Letitia's, to my watch. I do not doubt my luck, but must study some means of amusing my relations.

For all these distinctions I find myself indebted to that beauty which I was never suffered to hear praised, and of which, therefore, I did not before know the full value. The concealment was certainly an intentional fraud, for my aunts have eyes like other people, and I am every day told that nothing but blindness can escape the influence of my charms. Their whole account of that world which they pretend to know so well, has been only one fiction entangled with another; and though the modes of life oblige me to continue some appearances of respect, I cannot think that they, who



have been so clearly detected in ignorance or imposture,  
have any right to the esteem, veneration, or obedience of,  
Sir, Yours,

BELLARIA.

No. 203. TUESDAY, *February 25, 1752*

*Oum volet illa dies, quæ nil nisi corporis hujus  
Jus habet, incerti spatium mihi finiat ævi.*

—OVID, *Met.* 15. 873, 4.

Come, soon or late, death's undetermin'd day,  
This mortal being only can decay.—WELSTED.

It seems to be the fate of man to seek all his consolations in futurity. The time present is seldom able to fill desire or imagination with immediate enjoyment, and we are forced to supply its deficiencies by recollection or anticipation.

Every one has so often detected the fallaciousness of hope, and the inconvenience of teaching himself to expect what a thousand accidents may preclude, that, when time has abated the confidence with which youth rushes out to take possession of the world, we endeavor, or wish, to find entertainment in the review of life, and to repose upon real facts, and certain experience. This is perhaps one reason, among many, why age delights in narratives.

But so full is the world of calamity, that every source of pleasure is polluted, and every retirement of tranquillity disturbed. When time has supplied us with events sufficient to employ our thoughts, it has mingled them with so many disasters, that we shrink from their remembrance, dread their intrusion upon our minds, and fly from them as from enemies that pursue us with torture.

No man past the middle point of life can sit down to feast upon the pleasures of youth without finding the banquet embittered by the cup of sorrow; he may re-

vive lucky accidents, and pleasing extravagancies; many days of harmless frolic, or nights of honest festivity, will perhaps recur; or, if he has been engaged in scenes of action, and acquainted with affairs of difficulty and 5 vicissitudes of fortune, he may enjoy the nobler pleasure of looking back upon distress firmly supported, dangers resolutely encountered, and opposition artfully defeated. Æneas properly comforts his companions, when, after the horrors of a storm, they have landed on 10 an unknown and desolate country, with the hope that their miseries will be at some distant time recounted with delight. There are few higher gratifications than that of reflection on surmounted evils, when they are not incurred nor protracted by our fault, and neither 15 reproach us with cowardice nor guilt.

But this felicity is almost always abated by the reflection that they with whom we should be most pleased to share it are now in the grave. A few years make such havoc in human generations, that we soon see our 20 selves deprived of those with whom we entered the world, and whom the participation of pleasures or fatigues had endeared to our remembrance. The man of enterprise recounts his adventures and expedients, but is forced, at the close of the relation, to pay a 25 sigh to the names of those that contributed to his success; he that passes his life among the gayer part of mankind has his remembrance stored with remarks and repartees of wits, whose sprightliness and merriment are now lost in perpetual silence; the trader, whose 30 industry has supplied the want of inheritance, repines in solitary plenty at the absence of companions, with whom he had planned out amusements for his latter years; and the scholar, whose merit, after a long series of efforts, raises him from obscurity, looks round in vain 35 from his exaltation for his old friends or enemies, whose applause or mortification would heighten his triumph.

Among Martial's requisites to happiness is 'Res non

parta labore, sed relicta'—'an estate not gained by industry, but left by inheritance.' It is necessary to the completion of every good, that it be timely obtained; for whatever comes at the close of life will come too late to give much delight; yet all human happiness has 5 its defects. Of what we do not gain for ourselves we have only a faint and imperfect fruition, because we cannot compare the difference between want and possession, or at least can derive from it no conviction of our own abilities, nor any increase of self-esteem; 10 what we acquire by bravery or science, by mental or corporeal diligence, comes at last when we cannot communicate, and therefore cannot enjoy it.

Thus every period of life is obliged to borrow its happiness from the time to come. In youth we have 15 nothing past to entertain us, and in age, we derive little from retrospect but hopeless sorrow. Yet the future likewise has its limits, which the imagination dreads to approach, but which we see to be not far distant. The loss of our friends and companions impresses hourly 20 upon us the necessity of our own departure; we know that the schemes of man are quickly at an end, that we must soon lie down in the grave with the forgotten multitudes of former ages, and yield our place to others, who, like us, shall be driven awhile by hope or fear 25 about the surface of the earth, and then, like us, be lost in the shades of death.

Beyond this termination of our material existence we are therefore obliged to extend our hopes; and almost every man indulges his imagination with something 30 which is not to happen till he has changed his manner of being: some amuse themselves with entails and settlements, provide for the perpetuation of families and honors, or contrive to obviate the dissipation of the fortunes which it has been their business to accumulate; 35 others, more refined or exalted, congratulate their own hearts upon the future extent of their reputation, the

reverence of distant nations, and the gratitude of unprejudiced posterity.

They whose souls are so chained down to coffers and tenements, that they cannot conceive a state in which they shall look upon them with less solicitude, are seldom attentive or flexible to arguments; but the votaries of fame are capable of reflection, and therefore may be called to reconsider the probability of their expectations.

Whether to be remembered in remote times be worthy of a wise man's wish, has not yet been satisfactorily decided; and, indeed, to be long remembered, can happen to so small a number, that the bulk of mankind has very little interest in the question. There is never room in the world for more than a certain quantity or measure of renown. The necessary business of life, the immediate pleasures or pains of every condition, leave us not leisure beyond a fixed proportion for contemplations which do not forcibly influence our present welfare. When this vacuity is filled, no characters can be admitted into the circulation of fame, but by occupying the place of some that must be thrust into oblivion. The eye of the mind, like that of the body, can only extend its view to new objects, by losing sight of those which are now before it.

Reputation is therefore a meteor which blazes a while and disappears for ever; and, if we except a few transcendent and invincible names, which no revolutions of opinion or length of time is able to suppress; all those that engage our thoughts, or diversify our conversation, are every moment hasting to obscurity, as new favorites are adopted by fashion.

It is not therefore from this world, that any ray of comfort can proceed, to cheer the gloom of the last hour. But futurity has still its prospects; there is yet happiness in reserve, which, if we transfer our attention to it, will support us in the pains of disease and the

•

languor of decay. This happiness we may expect with confidence, because it is out of the power of chance, and may be attained by all that sincerely desire and earnestly pursue it.' On this therefore every mind ought finally to rest. Hope is the chief blessing of man, and that hope only is rational of which we are certain that it cannot deceive us.

No. 204. SATURDAY, *February 29, 1752*

*Nemo tam divos habuit faventes,  
Crastinum ut possit sibi polliceri.*—SENECA.

Of heaven's protection who can be  
So confident to utter this?—  
To-morrow I will spend in bliss.—F. LEWIS.

SEGED, lord of Ethiopia, to the inhabitants of the world: To the sons of *presumption*, humility and fear; and to the daughters of *sorrow*, content and acquiescence. 10

Thus, in the twenty-seventh year of his reign, spoke Seged, the monarch of forty nations, the distributor of the waters of the Nile: 'At length, Seged, thy toils are at an end; thou hast reconciled disaffection, thou hast suppressed rebellion, thou hast pacified the jealousies of 15 thy courtiers, thou hast chased war from thy confines, and erected fortresses in the lands of thine enemies. All who have offended thee tremble in thy presence, and wherever thy voice is heard, it is obeyed. Thy throne is surrounded by armies numerous as the locusts of the 20 summer, and resistless as the blasts of pestilence. Thy magazines are stored with ammunition, thy treasures overflow with the tribute of conquered kingdoms. Plenty waves upon thy fields, and opulence glitters in thy cities. Thy nod is as the earthquake that shakes the 25 mountains, and thy smile as the dawn of the vernal day. In thy hand is the strength of thousands, and thy health is the health of millions. Thy palace is gladdened by the song of praise, and thy path perfumed

by the breath of benediction. Thy subjects gaze upon thy greatness, and think of danger or misery no more. Why, Seged, wilt not thou partake the blessings thou bestowest? Why shouldst thou only forbear to rejoice  
5 in this general felicity? Why should thy face be clouded with anxiety, when the meanest of those who call thee sovereign gives the day to festivity, and the night to peace? At length, Seged, reflect and be wise. What is the gift of conquest but safety? Why are  
10 riches collected but to purchase happiness?’

Seged then ordered the house of pleasure, built in an island of the lake of Dambea, to be prepared for his reception. ‘I will retire,’ says he, ‘for ten days from tumult and care, from counsels and decrees. Long quiet  
15 is not the lot of the governors of nations, but a cessation of ten days cannot be denied me. This short interval of happiness may surely be secured from the interruption of fear or perplexity, sorrow or disappointment. I will exclude all trouble from my abode, and  
20 remove from my thoughts whatever may confuse the harmony of the concert, or abate the sweetness of the banquet. I will fill the whole capacity of my soul with enjoyment, and try what it is to live without a wish unsatisfied.’

25 In a few days the orders were performed, and Seged hasted to the palace of Dambea, which stood in an island cultivated only for pleasure, planted with every flower that spreads its colors to the sun, and every shrub that sheds fragrance in the air. In one part  
30 of this extensive garden, were open walks for excursions in the morning; in another, thick groves, and silent arbors, and bubbling fountains for repose at noon. All that could solace the sense, or flatter the fancy, all that industry could extort from nature, or wealth furnish  
35 to art, all that conquest could seize, or beneficence attract, was collected together, and every perception of delight was excited and gratified.

Into this delicious region Seged summoned all the persons of his court who seemed eminently qualified to receive or communicate pleasure. His call was readily obeyed; the young, the fair, the vivacious, and the witty, were all in haste to be sated with felicity. They sailed jocund over the lake, which seemed to smoothe its surface before them: their passage was cheered with music, and their hearts dilated with expectation.

Seged, landing here with his band of pleasure, determined from that hour to break off all acquaintance with discontent, to give his heart for ten days to ease and jollity, and then fall back to the common state of man, and suffer his life to be diversified, as before, with joy and sorrow.

He immediately entered his chamber to consider where he should begin his circle of happiness. He had all the artists of delight before him, but knew not whom to call, since he could not enjoy one but by delaying the performance of another. He chose and rejected, he resolved and changed his resolution, till his faculties were harassed, and his thoughts confused; then returned to the apartment where his presence was expected with languid eyes and clouded countenance, and spread the infection of uneasiness over the whole assembly. He observed their depression, and was offended, for he found his vexation increased by those whom he expected to dissipate and relieve it. He retired again to his private chamber, and sought for consolation in his own mind; one thought flowed in upon another; a long succession of images seized his attention; the moments crept imperceptibly away through the gloom of pensiveness, till, having recovered his tranquillity, he lifted up his head, and saw the lake brightened by the setting sun. 'Such,' said Seged sighing, 'is the longest day of human existence: before we have learned to use it, we find it at an end.'

The regret which he felt for the loss of so great a

part of his first day took from him all disposition to enjoy the evening; and, after having endeavored, for the sake of his attendants, to force an air of gaiety, and excite that mirth which he could not share, he resolved to refer his hopes to the next morning, and lay down to partake with the slaves of labor and poverty the blessing of sleep.

He rose early the second morning, and resolved now to be happy. He therefore fixed upon the gate of the palace an edict, importing that whoever, during nine days, should appear in the presence of the king with a dejected countenance, or utter any expression of discontent or sorrow, should be driven for ever from the palace of Dambea.

This edict was immediately made known in every chamber of the court and bower of the gardens. Mirth was frightened away, and they who were before dancing in the lawns, or singing in the shades, were at once engaged in the care of regulating their looks, that Seged might find his will punctually obeyed, and see none among them liable to banishment.

Seged now met every face settled in a smile; but a smile that betrayed solicitude, timidity, and constraint. He accosted his favorites with familiarity and softness; but they durst not speak without premeditation, lest they should be convicted of discontent or sorrow. He proposed diversions, to which no objection was made, because objection would have implied uneasiness; but they were regarded with indifference by the courtiers, who had no other desire than to signalize themselves by clamorous exultation. He offered various topics of conversation, but obtained only forced jests and laborious laughter; and after many attempts to animate his train to confidence and alacrity, was obliged to confess to himself the impotence of command, and resign another day to grief and disappointment.

He at last relieved his companions from their terrors,



and shut himself up in his chamber to ascertain, by different measures, the felicity of the succeeding days. At length he threw himself on the bed, and closed his eyes, but imagined, in his sleep, that his palace and gardens were overwhelmed by an inundation, and waked 5 with all the terrors of a man struggling in the water. He composed himself again to rest, but was affrighted by an imaginary irruption into his kingdom, and striving, as is usual in dreams, without ability to move, fancied himself betrayed to his enemies, and again 10 started up with horror and indignation.

It was now day, and fear was so strongly impressed on his mind that he could sleep no more. He rose, but his thoughts were filled with the deluge and invasion, nor was he able to disengage his attention, or 15 mingle with vacancy and ease in any amusement. At length his perturbation gave way to reason, and he resolved no longer to be harassed by visionary miseries; but before this resolution could be completed, half the day had elapsed: he felt a new conviction of the un- 20 certainty of human schemes, and could not forbear to bewail the weakness of that being whose quiet was to be interrupted by vapors of the fancy. Having been first disturbed by a dream, he afterwards grieved that a dream could disturb him. He at last discovered that 25 his terrors and grief were equally vain, and that to lose the present in lamenting the past was voluntarily to protract a melancholy vision. The third day was now declining, and Seged again resolved to be happy on the morrow.

No. 205. TUESDAY, March 3, 1752

———*Volat ambigu  
Mobilis alis hora, nec ulli  
Præstat velox fortuna fidem.*

—SENECA, *Hippol.* 1140-2.

On fickle wings the minutes haste,  
And fortune's favors never last.—F. LEWIS.

ON the fourth morning Seged rose early, refreshed with sleep, vigorous with health, and eager with expectation. He entered the garden, attended by the princes and ladies of his court, and seeing nothing  
5 about him but airy cheerfulness, began to say to his heart, 'This day shall be a day of pleasure.' The sun played upon the water, the birds warbled in the groves, and the gales quivered among the branches. He roved from walk to walk as chance directed him, and some-  
10 times listened to the songs, sometimes mingled with the dancers, sometimes let loose his imagination in flights of merriment; and sometimes uttered grave reflections, and sententious maxims, and feasted on the admiration with which they were received.

15 Thus the day rolled on without any accident of vexation or intrusion of melancholy thoughts. All that beheld him caught gladness from his looks, and the sight of happiness conferred by himself filled his heart with satisfaction; but having passed three hours in this  
20 harmless luxury, he was alarmed on a sudden by an universal scream among the women, and turning back, saw the whole assembly flying in confusion. A young crocodile had risen out of the lake, and was ranging the garden in wantonness or hunger. Seged beheld him  
25 with indignation, as a disturber of his felicity, and chased him back into the lake, but could not persuade his retinue to stay, or free their hearts from the terror which had seized upon them. The princesses enclosed themselves in the palace, and could yet scarcely believe  
30 themselves in safety. Every attention was fixed upon

the late danger and escape, and no mind was any longer at leisure for gay sallies or careless prattle.

Seged had now no other employment than to contemplate the innumerable casualties which lie in ambush on every side to intercept the happiness of man, and 5 break in upon the hour of delight and tranquillity. He had, however, the consolation of thinking that he had not been now disappointed by his own fault, and that the accident which had blasted the hopes of the day might easily be prevented by future caution. 10

That he might provide for the pleasure of the next morning, he resolved to repeal his penal edict, since he had already found that discontent and melancholy were not to be frightened away by the threats of authority, and that Pleasure would only reside where she 15 was exempted from control. He therefore invited all the companions of his retreat to unbounded pleasantries, by proposing prizes for those who should, on the following day, distinguish themselves by any festive performances; the tables of the antechamber were covered with 20 gold and pearls, and robes and garlands decreed the rewards of those who could refine elegance or heighten pleasure.

At this display of riches every eye immediately sparkled, and every tongue was busied in celebrating 25 the bounty and magnificence of the emperor. But when Seged entered, in hopes of uncommon entertainment from universal emulation, he found that any passion too strongly agitated puts an end to that tranquillity which is necessary to mirth, and that the mind that 30 is to be moved by the gentle ventilations of gaiety must be first smoothed by a total calm. Whatever we ardently wish to gain, we must in the same degree be afraid to lose, and fear and pleasure cannot dwell together.

All was now care and solicitude. Nothing was done 35 or spoken, but with so visible an endeavor at perfection as always failed to delight, though it sometimes forced

admiration; and Seged could not but observe with sorrow that his prizes had more influence than himself. As the evening approached, the contest grew more earnest, and those who were forced to allow themselves  
5 excelled began to discover the malignity of defeat, first by angry glances, and at last by contemptuous murmurs. Seged likewise shared the anxiety of the day, for considering himself as obliged to distribute with exact justice the prizes which had been so zealously sought,  
10 he durst never remit his attention, but passed his time upon the rack of doubt in balancing different kinds of merit, and adjusting the claims of all the competitors.

At last, knowing that no exactness could satisfy those whose hopes he should disappoint, and thinking that  
15 on a day set apart for happiness, it would be cruel to oppress any heart with sorrow, he declared that all had pleased him alike, and dismissed all with presents of equal value.

Seged soon saw that his caution had not been able  
20 to avoid offense. They who had believed themselves secure of the highest prizes, were not pleased to be levelled with the crowd; and though, by the liberality of the king, they received more than his promise had entitled them to expect, they departed unsatisfied, be-  
25 cause they were honored with no distinction, and wanted an opportunity to triumph in the mortification of their opponents. 'Behold here,' said Seged, 'the condition of him who places his happiness in the happiness of others.' He then retired to meditate, and, while the  
30 courtiers were repining at his distributions, saw the fifth sun go down in discontent.

The next dawn renewed his resolution to be happy. But having learned how little he could effect by settled schemes or preparatory measures, he thought it best to  
35 give up one day entirely to chance, and left every one to please and be pleased his own way.

This relaxation of regularity diffused a general com-

placence through the whole court, and the emperor imagined that he had at last found the secret of obtaining an interval of felicity. But as he was roving in this careless assembly with equal carelessness, he overheard one of his courtiers in a close arbor murmuring alone: 5  
'What merit has Seged above us, that we should thus fear and obey him, a man, whom, whatever he may have formerly performed, his luxury now shows to have the same weakness with ourselves.' This charge affected him the more, as it was uttered by one whom he had 10  
always observed among the most abject of his flatterers. At first his indignation prompted him to severity; but reflecting that what was spoken without intention to be heard, was to be considered as only thought, and was perhaps but the sudden burst of casual and tempo- 15  
rary vexation, he invented some decent pretense to send him away, that his retreat might not be tainted with the breath of envy, and, after the struggle of deliberation was past, and all desire of revenge utterly suppressed, passed the evening not only with tranquillity, 20  
but triumph, though none but himself was conscious of the victory.

The remembrance of his clemency cheered the beginning of the seventh day, and nothing happened to disturb the pleasure of Seged, till, looking on the tree 25  
that shaded him, he recollected that under a tree of the same kind he had passed the night after his defeat in the kingdom of Goiama. The reflection on his loss, his dishonor, and the miseries which his subjects suffered from the invader, filled him with sadness. At last 30  
he shook off the weight of sorrow, and began to solace himself with his usual pleasures, when his tranquillity was again disturbed by jealousies which the late contest for the prizes had produced, and which, having in vain tried to pacify them by persuasion, he was forced to 35  
silence by command.

On the eighth morning Seged was awakened early

by an unusual hurry in the apartments, and inquiring the cause, was told that the princess Balkis was seized with sickness. He rose, and calling the physicians, found that they had little hope of her recovery. Here was an  
5 end of jollity; all his thoughts were now upon his daughter, whose eyes he closed on the tenth day.

Such were the days which Seged of Ethiopia had appropriated to a short respiration from the fatigues of war and the cares of government. This narrative he  
10 has bequeathed to future generations, that no man hereafter may presume to say, 'This day shall be a day of happiness.'

## The Adventurer<sup>1</sup>

No. 102. SATURDAY, October 27, 1753

—*Quid tam dextro pede concipis, ut te  
Conatus non pœniteat, votique peracti?*—JUV. 10. 5, 6.

What in the conduct of our life appears  
So well design'd, so luckily begun,  
But when we have our wish, we wish undone?—DRYDEN.

### TO THE ADVENTURER

SIR:

I HAVE been for many years a trader in London. My beginning was narrow, and my stock small; I was, therefore, a long time brow-beaten and despised by those who, having more money, thought they had more merit than myself. I did not, however, suffer my resentment to instigate me to any mean arts of supplantation, nor my eagerness of riches to betray me to any indirect methods of gain; I pursued my business with incessant assiduity, supported by the hope of being one day richer than those who contemned me; and had, upon every annual review of my books, the satisfaction of finding my fortune increased beyond my expectation.

In a few years my industry and probity were fully recompensed, my wealth was really great, and my reputation for wealth still greater. I had large warehouses crowded with goods, and considerable sums in the public funds; I was caressed upon the Exchange by the

<sup>1</sup> Eight months after the end of *The Rambler*, Johnson's friend and admirer, Hawkesworth, began *The Adventurer*. It was published semi-weekly for more than a year, and Johnson wrote more than twenty essays for it, besides giving his very useful advice and suggestions.

most eminent merchants; became the oracle of the common council; was solicited to engage in all commercial undertakings; was flattered with the hopes of becoming in a short time one of the directors of a wealthy company; and, to complete my mercantile honors, enjoyed the expensive happiness of fining for sheriff.

Riches, you know, easily ~~produce~~ riches; when I had arrived to this degree of wealth, I had no longer any obstruction or opposition to fear; new acquisitions were hourly brought within my reach, and I continued for some years longer to heap thousands upon thousands.

At last I resolved to complete the circle of a citizen's prosperity by the purchase of an estate in the country, and to close my life in retirement. From the hour that this design entered my imagination, I found the fatigues of my employment every day more oppressive, and persuaded myself that I was no longer equal to perpetual attention, and that my health would soon be destroyed by the torment and distraction of extensive business. I could imagine to myself no happiness but in vacant jollity and uninterrupted leisure; nor entertain my friends with any other topic than the vexation and uncertainty of trade, and the happiness of rural privacy.

But notwithstanding these declarations, I could not at once reconcile myself to the thoughts of ceasing to get money; and though I was every day inquiring for a purchase, I found some reason for rejecting all that were offered me; and, indeed, had accumulated so many beauties and conveniencies in my idea of the spot where I was finally to be happy, that, perhaps, the world might have been travelled over without discovery of a place which would not have been defective in some particular.

Thus I went on, still talking of retirement, and still refusing to retire; my friends began to laugh at my delays, and I grew ashamed to trifle longer with my own inclinations; an estate was at length purchased, I transferred my stock to a prudent young man who had



married my daughter, went down into the country, and commenced lord of a spacious manor.

Here for some time I found happiness equal to my expectation. I reformed the old house according to the advice of the best architects, I threw down the walls of the garden, and enclosed it with palisades, planted long avenues of trees, filled a greenhouse with exotic plants, dug a new canal, and threw the earth into the old moat.

The fame of these expensive improvements brought in all the country to see the show. I entertained my visitors with great liberality, led them round my gardens, showed them my apartments, laid before them plans for new decorations, and was gratified by the wonder of some and the envy of others.

I was envied; but how little can one man judge of the condition of another! The time was now coming in which affluence and splendor could no longer make me pleased with myself. I had built till the imagination of the architect was exhausted; I had added one convenience to another till I knew not what more to wish or to design; I had laid out my gardens, planted my park, and completed my waterworks; and what now remained to be done? What, but to look up to turrets, of which, when they were once raised, I had no further use, to range over apartments where time was tarnishing the furniture, to stand by the cascade of which I scarcely now perceived the sound, and to watch the growth of woods that must give their shade to a distant generation?

In this gloomy inactivity is every day begun and ended; the happiness that I have been so long procuring is now at an end, because it has been procured; I wander from room to room, till I am weary of myself; I ride out to a neighboring hill in the centre of my estate, from whence all my lands lie in prospect round me; I see nothing that I have not seen before,

and return home disappointed, though I knew that I had nothing to expect.

In my happy days of business I had been accustomed to rise early in the morning; and remember the time when I grieved that the night came so soon upon me, and obliged me for a few hours to shut out affluence and prosperity. I now seldom see the rising sun, but to 'tell him,' with the fallen angel, 'how I hate his beams.' I awake from sleep as to languor or imprisonment, and have no employment for the first hour but to consider by what art I shall rid myself of the second. I protract the breakfast as long as I can, because when it is ended I have no call for my attention, till I can with some degree of decency grow impatient for my dinner. If I could dine all my life, I should be happy; I eat not because I am hungry, but because I am idle: but, alas! the time quickly comes when I can eat no longer; and so ill does my constitution second my inclination, that I cannot bear strong liquors; seven hours must then be endured before I shall sup; but supper comes at last, the more welcome as it is in a short time succeeded by sleep.

Such, Mr. Adventurer, is the happiness, the hope of which seduced me from the duties and pleasures of a mercantile life. I shall be told by those who read my narrative, that there are many means of innocent amusement, and many schemes of useful employment which I do not appear ever to have known; and that nature and art have provided pleasures by which, without the drudgery of settled business, the active may be engaged, the solitary soothed, and the social entertained.

These arts, Sir, I have tried. When first I took possession of my estate, in conformity to the taste of my neighbors, I bought guns and nets, filled my kennel with dogs, and my stable with horses: but a little experience showed me that these instruments of rural felicity would afford me few gratifications. I never shot but to miss

the mark, and, to confess the truth, was afraid of the fire of my own gun. I could discover no music in the cry of the dogs, nor could divest myself of pity for the animal whose peaceful and inoffensive life was sacrificed to our sport. I was not, indeed, always at 5 leisure to reflect upon her danger; for my horse, who had been bred to the chase, did not always regard my choice either of speed or way, but leaped hedges and ditches at his own discretion, and hurried me along with the dogs, to the great diversion of my brother 10 sportsmen. His eagerness of pursuit once incited him to swim a river; and I had leisure to resolve in the water that I would never hazard my life again for the destruction of a hare.

I then ordered books to be procured, and by the 15 direction of the vicar had in a few weeks a closet elegantly furnished. You will, perhaps, be surprised when I shall tell you that when once I had ranged them according to their sizes, and piled them up in regular gradations, I had received all the pleasure which 20 they could give me. I am not able to exult in myself any curiosity after events which have been long passed, and in which I can therefore, have no interest; I am utterly unconcerned to know whether Tully or Demosthenes excelled in oratory, whether Hannibal lost Italy 25 by his own negligence or the corruption of his countrymen. I have no skill in controversial learning, nor can conceive why so many volumes should have been written upon questions which I have lived so long and so happily without understanding. I once resolved 30 to go through the volumes relating to the office of justice of the peace, but found them so crabbed and intricate, that in less than a month I desisted in despair, and resolved to supply my deficiencies by paying a competent salary to a skillful clerk.

35

I am naturally inclined to hospitality, and for some time kept up a constant intercourse of visits with the

neighboring gentlemen; but though they are easily brought about me by better wine than they can find at any other house, I am not much relieved by their conversation; they have no skill in commerce or the 5 stocks, and I have no knowledge of the history of families or the factions of the country; so that when the first civilities are over, they usually talk to one another, and I am left alone in the midst of the company. Though I cannot drink myself, I am obliged to 10 encourage the circulation of the glass; their mirth grows more turbulent and obstreperous; and before their merriment is at an end, I am sick with disgust, and perhaps reproached with my sobriety, or by some sly insinuations insulted as a cit.

15 Such, Mr. Adventurer, is the life to which I am condemned by a foolish endeavor to be happy by imitation; such is the happiness to which I pleased myself with approaching, and which I considered as the chief end of my cares and labors. I toiled year after year with 20 cheerfulness, in expectation of the happy hour in which I might be idle. The privilege of idleness is attained, but has not brought with it the blessing of tranquillity.

I am, yours, &c.

MERCATOR.

## PREFATORY NOTE ON *THE IDLER*

*The Idler* was the last of Johnson's periodical writings. It appeared weekly in the *Universal Chronicle*, published by the famous Newbery. Beginning in April, 1758, Johnson wrote the one hundred and three essays in the next two years. In the midst of this labor he lost his mother, 'whose death,' he wrote, 'is one of the few calamities on which I think with terror.' Immediately after this he wrote *Rasselas* during the evenings of one week, and used a part of the hundred pounds thus earned to pay his mother's debts. *The Idler* was written easily and rapidly. 'Mr. Langton remembers Johnson, when on a visit to Oxford, asking him one evening how long it was till the post went out; and on being told about half an hour, instantly sat down and finished an *Idler*, which it was necessary should be in London the next day. Mr. Langton having signified a wish to read it, "Sir (said he), you shall not do more than I have done myself." He then folded it up and sent it off' (*Life* 1. 331).

## The Idler

No. 23. SATURDAY, *September 23, 1758*

LIFE has no pleasure higher or nobler than that of friendship. It is painful to consider that this sublime enjoyment may be impaired or destroyed by innumerable causes, and that there is no human possession of which  
5 the duration is less certain.

Many have talked in very exalted language, of the perpetuity of friendship, of invincible constancy, and unalienable kindness; and some examples have been seen of men who have continued faithful to their earliest  
10 choice, and whose affection has predominated over changes of fortune, and contrariety of opinion.

But these instances are memorable, because they are rare. The friendship which is to be practised or expected by common mortals, must take its rise from  
15 mutual pleasure, and must end when the power ceases of delighting each other.

Many accidents therefore may happen by which the ardor of kindness will be abated, without criminal baseness or contemptible inconstancy on either part. To  
20 give pleasure is not always in our power; and little does he know himself who believes that he can be always able to receive it.

Those who would gladly pass their days together may be separated by the different course of their affairs;  
25 and friendship, like love, is destroyed by long absence, though it may be increased by short intermissions. What we have missed long enough to want it, we value more

when it is regained; but that which has been lost till it is forgotten, will be found at last with little gladness, and with still less if a substitute has supplied the place. A man deprived of the companion to whom he used to open his bosom, and with whom he shared the hours 5 of leisure and merriment, feels the day at first hanging heavy on him; his difficulties oppress, and his doubts distract him; he sees time come and go without his wonted gratification, and all is sadness within, and solitude about him. But this uneasiness never lasts long; 10 necessity produces expedients, new amusements are discovered, and new conversation is admitted.

No expectation is more frequently disappointed, than that which naturally arises in the mind from the prospect of meeting an old friend after long separation. 15 We expect the attraction to be revived, and the coalition to be renewed; no man considers how much alteration time has made in himself, and very few inquire what effect it has had upon others. The first hour convinces them that the pleasure which they have formerly enjoyed, is for ever at an end; different scenes have made different impressions; the opinions of both are changed; 20 and that similitude of manners and sentiment is lost which confirmed them both in the approbation of themselves.

25

Friendship is often destroyed by opposition of interest, not only by the ponderous and visible interest which the desire of wealth and greatness forms and maintains, but by a thousand secret and slight competitions, scarcely known to the mind upon which they operate. There is 30 scarcely any man without some favorite trifle which he values above greater attainments, some desire of petty praise which he cannot patiently suffer to be frustrated. This minute ambition is sometimes crossed before it is known, and sometimes defeated by wanton 35 petulance; but such attacks are seldom made without the loss of friendship; for whoever has once found the

vulnerable part will always be feared, and the resentment will burn on in secret, of which shame hinders the discovery.

This, however, is a slow malignity, which a wise man will obviate as inconsistent with quiet, and a good man will repress as contrary to virtue; but human happiness is sometimes violated by some more sudden strokes.

A dispute begun in jest upon a subject which a moment before was on both parts regarded with careless indifference, is continued by the desire of conquest, till vanity kindles into rage, and opposition rankles into enmity. Against this hasty mischief, I know not what security can be obtained; men will be sometimes surprised into quarrels; and though they might both hasten to reconciliation, as soon as their tumult had subsided, yet two minds will seldom be found together, which can at once subdue their discontent, or immediately enjoy the sweets of peace without remembering the wounds of the conflict.

Friendship has other enemies. Suspicion is always hardening the cautious, and disgust repelling the delicate. Very slender differences will sometimes part those whom long reciprocation of civility or beneficence has united. Lonelove and Ranger retired into the country to enjoy the company of each other, and returned in six weeks, cold and petulant; Ranger's pleasure was to walk in the fields, and Lonelove's to sit in a bower; each had complied with the other in his turn, and each was angry that compliance had been exacted.

The most fatal disease of friendship is gradual decay, or dislike hourly increased by causes too slender for complaint, and too numerous for removal. Those who are angry may be reconciled; those who have been injured may receive a recompense: but when the desire of pleasing and willingness to be pleased is silently diminished, the renovation of friendship is hopeless;



as, when the vital powers sink into languor, there is no longer any use of the physician.

No. 41. SATURDAY, *January 27, 1759*

THE following letter relates to an affliction perhaps not necessary to be imparted to the public; but I could not persuade myself to suppress it, because I know the sentiments to be sincere, and I feel no disposition to provide for this day any other entertainment.

*At tu quisquis eris, miseri qui cruda poetæ  
Credideris fletu funera digna tuo,  
Hæc postrema tibi sit flendi causa, fluatque  
Lentis inoffenso vitæque morsque gradu.*

10

MR. IDLER:

Notwithstanding the warnings of philosophers, and the daily examples of losses and misfortunes which life forces upon our observation, such is the absorption of 15 our thoughts in the business of the present day, such the resignation of our reason to empty hopes of future felicity, or such our unwillingness to foresee what we dread, that every calamity comes suddenly upon us, and not only presses us as a burden, but crushes as a 20 blow.

There are evils which happen out of the common course of nature, against which it is no reproach not to be provided. A flash of lightning intercepts the traveller in his way. The concussion of an earthquake 25 heaps the ruins of cities upon their inhabitants. But other miseries time brings, though silently yet visibly, forward by its even lapse, which yet approach us unseen because we turn our eyes away, and seize us unresisted, because we could not arm ourselves against 30 them but by setting them before us.

That it is vain to shrink from what cannot be avoided, and to hide that from ourselves which must some time be found, is a truth which we all know, but which

all neglect, and perhaps none more than the speculative reasoner, whose thoughts are always from home, whose eye wanders over life, whose fancy dances after meteors of happiness kindled by himself, and who examines every thing rather than his own state.

Nothing is more evident than that the decays of age must terminate in death; yet there is no man, says Tully, who does not believe that he may yet live another year; and there is none who does not, upon the same principle, hope another year for his parent or his friend; but the fallacy will be in time detected: the last year, the last day, must come. It has come, and is past. The life which made my own life pleasant is at an end, and the gates of death are shut upon my prospects.

The loss of a friend upon whom the heart was fixed, to whom every wish and endeavor tended, is a state of dreary desolation, in which the mind looks abroad impatient of itself, and finds nothing but emptiness and horror. The blameless life, the artless tenderness, the pious simplicity, the modest resignation, the patient sickness, and the quiet death, are remembered only to add value to the loss, to aggravate regret for what cannot be amended, to deepen sorrow for what cannot be recalled.

These are the calamities by which Providence gradually disengages us from the love of life. Other evils fortitude may repel, or hope may mitigate; but irreparable privation leaves nothing to exercise resolution or flatter expectation. The dead cannot return, and nothing is left us here but languishment and grief.

Yet such is the course of nature, that whoever lives long must outlive those whom he loves and honors. Such is the condition of our present existence, that life must one time lose its associations, and every inhabitant of the earth must walk downward to the grave alone and unregarded, without any partner of his joy or

grief, without any interested witness of his misfortunes or success.

Misfortune, indeed, he may yet feel; for where is the bottom of the misery of man? But what is success to him that has none to enjoy it? Happiness is not found in self-contemplation; it is perceived only when it is reflected from another.

We know little of the state of departed souls, because such knowledge is not necessary to a good life. Reason deserts us at the brink of the grave and can give no farther intelligence. Revelation is not wholly silent. 'There is joy in the angels of Heaven over one sinner that repenteth'; and surely this joy is not incommunicable to souls disentangled from the body, and made like angels. 15

Let hope therefore dictate what revelation does not confute, that the union of souls may still remain; and that we who are struggling with sin, sorrow, and infirmities, may have our part in the attention and kindness of those who have finished their course, and are now receiving their reward. 20

These are the great occasions which force the mind to take refuge in religion: when we have no help in ourselves, what can remain but that we look up to a higher and a greater Power? And to what hope may we not raise our eyes and hearts, when we consider that the greatest POWER is the BEST? 25

Surely there is no man who, thus afflicted, does not seek succor in the Gospel, which has brought 'life and immortality to light.' The precepts of Epicurus, who teaches us to endure what the laws of the universe make necessary, may silence, but not content us. The dictates of Zeno, who commands us to look with indifference on external things, may dispose us to conceal our sorrow, but cannot assuage it. Real alleviation of the loss of friends, and rational tranquillity in the prospect of our own dissolution, can be received only 35

from the promises of Him in whose hands are life and death, and from the assurance of another and a better state, in which all tears will be wiped from the eyes, and the whole soul shall be filled with joy. Philosophy may infuse stubbornness, but Religion only can give patience. I am, &c.

No. 45. SATURDAY, *February 24, 1759*

THERE is in many minds a kind of vanity exerted to the disadvantage of themselves; a desire to be praised for superior acuteness discovered only in the degradation of their species, or censure of their country.

Defamation is sufficiently copious. The general lamppooner of mankind may find long exercise for his zeal or wit, in the defects of nature, the vexations of life, the follies of opinion, and the corruptions of practice. But fiction is easier than discernment; and most of these writers spare themselves the labor of inquiry, and exhaust their virulence upon imaginary crimes, which, as they never existed, can never be amended.

That the painters find no encouragement among the English for many other works than portraits, has been imputed to national selfishness. 'Tis vain, says the satirist, to set before any Englishman the scenes of landscape, or the heroes of history; nature and antiquity are nothing in his eye; he has no value but for himself, nor desires any copy but of his own form.

Whoever is delighted with his own picture must derive his pleasure from the pleasure of another. Every man is always present to himself, and has, therefore, little need of his own resemblance, nor can desire it, but for the sake of those whom he loves, and by whom he hopes to be remembered. This use of the art is a natural and reasonable consequence of affection; and though, like other human actions, it is often complicated with pride, yet even such pride is more laudable than that by

which palaces are covered with pictures, that, however excellent, neither imply the owner's virtue, nor excite it.

Genius is chiefly exerted in historical pictures; and the art of the painter of portraits is often lost in the obscurity of his subject. But it is in painting as in life, what is greatest is not always best. I should grieve to see Reynolds transfer to heroes and to goddesses, to empty splendor and to airy fiction, that art which is now employed in diffusing friendship, in re-  
viving tenderness, in quickening the affections of the  
absent, and continuing the presence of the dead.

Yet in a nation great and opulent there is room, and ought to be patronage, for an art like that of painting through all its diversities; and it is to be wished that the reward now offered for an historical picture may excite an honest emulation, and give beginning to an English school.

It is not very easy to find an action or event that can be efficaciously represented by a painter. 20

He must have an action not successive but instantaneous; for the time of a picture is a single moment. For this reason the death of Hercules cannot well be painted, though at the first view it flatters the imagination with very glittering ideas: the gloomy mountain  
overhanging the sea, and covered with trees, some bending to the wind, and some torn from their roots by the raging hero; the violence with which he rends from his shoulders the envenomed garment; the propriety with which his muscular nakedness may be displayed; the  
death of Lycas whirled from the promontory; the  
gigantic presence of Philoctetes; the blaze of the fatal pile, which the deities behold with grief and terror from the sky.

All these images fill the mind, but will not compose a  
picture, because they cannot be united in a single moment. Hercules must have rent his flesh at one time,

and tossed Lycas into the air at another; he must first tear up the trees, and then lie down upon the pile.

The action must be circumstantial and distinct. There is a passage in the *Iliad* which cannot be read without strong emotions. A Trojan prince, seized by Achilles in the battle, falls at his feet, and in moving terms supplicates for life. 'How can a wretch like thee,' says the haughty Greek, 'entreat to live, when thou knowest that the time must come when Achilles is to die?' This cannot be painted, because no peculiarity of attitude or disposition can so supply the place of language as to impress the sentiment.

The event painted must be such as excites passion, and different passions in the several actors, or a tumult of contending passions in the chief.

Perhaps the discovery of Ulysses by his nurse is of this kind. The surprise of the nurse mingled with joy; that of Ulysses checked by prudence, and clouded by solicitude; and the distinctness of the action by which the scar is found; all concur to complete the subject. But the picture, having only two figures, will want variety.

A much nobler assemblage may be furnished by the death of Epaminondas. The mixture of gladness and grief in the face of the messenger who brings his dying general an account of the victory; the various passions of the attendants; the sublimity of composure in the hero, while the dart is by his own command drawn from his side, and the faint gleam of satisfaction that diffuses itself over the languor of death, are worthy of that pencil which yet I do not wish to see employed upon them.

If the design were not too multifarious and extensive, I should wish that our painters would attempt the dissolution of the Parliament by Cromwell. The point of time may be chosen when Cromwell, looking round the Pandæmonium with contempt, ordered the

bauble to be taken away; and Harrison laid hands on the Speaker to drag him from the chair.

The various appearances which rage, and terror, and astonishment, and guilt, might exhibit in the faces of that hateful assembly, of whom the principal persons 5 may be faithfully drawn from portraits or prints; the irresolute repugnance of some, the hypocritical submissions of others, the ferocious insolence of Cromwell, the rugged brutality of Harrison, and the general trepidation of fear and wickedness, would, if some proper 10 disposition could be contrived, make a picture of unexampled variety, and irresistible instruction.

No. 59. SATURDAY, *June 2, 1759*

IN the common enjoyments of life, we cannot very liberally indulge the present hour, but by anticipating part of the pleasure which might have relieved the 15 tediousness of another day; and any uncommon exertion of strength, or perseverance in labor, is succeeded by a long interval of languor and weariness. Whatever advantage we snatch beyond the certain portion allotted us by nature, is like money spent before it is due, 20 which at the time of regular payment will be missed and regretted.

Fame, like all other things which are supposed to give or to increase happiness, is dispensed with the same equality of distribution. He that is loudly praised will 25 be clamorously censured; he that rises hastily into fame will be in danger of sinking suddenly into oblivion.

Of many writers who filled their age with wonder, and whose names we find celebrated in the books of their contemporaries, the works are now no longer to be seen, 30 or are seen only amidst the lumber of libraries which are seldom visited, where they lie only to show the deceitfulness of hope, and the uncertainty of honor.

Of the decline of reputation many causes may be

assigned. It is commonly lost because it never was  
 . deserved; and was conferred at first, not by the suffrage  
 of criticism, but by the fondness of friendship, or ser-  
 vility of flattery. The great and popular are very  
 5 freely applauded; but all soon grow weary of echoing  
 to each other a name which has no other claim to notice,  
 but that many mouths are pronouncing it at once.

But many have lost the final reward of their labors,  
 because they were too hasty to enjoy it. They have  
 10 laid hold on recent occurrences, and eminent names, and  
 delighted their readers with allusions and remarks, in  
 which all were interested, and to which all therefore  
 were attentive. But the effect ceased with its cause;  
 the time quickly came when new events drove the former  
 15 from memory, when the vicissitudes of the world brought  
 new hopes and fears, transferred the love and hatred  
 of the public to other agents, and the writer, whose  
 works were no longer assisted by gratitude or resent-  
 ment, was left to the cold regard of idle curiosity.

20 He that writes upon general principles, or delivers  
universal truths, may hope to be often read, because  
his work will be equally useful at all times and in  
every country; but he cannot expect it to be received  
with eagerness, or to spread with rapidity, because de-  
 25 sire can have no particular stimulation: that which is  
 to be loved long, must be loved with reason rather  
 than with passion. He that lays out his labors upon  
 temporary subjects easily finds readers, and quickly  
 loses them; for what should make the book valued when  
 30 its subject is no more?

These observations will show the reason why the  
 poem of *Hudibras* is almost forgotten, however em-  
 bellished with sentiments and diversified with allusions,  
 however bright with wit, and however solid with truth.  
 35 The hypocrisy which it detected, and the folly which  
 it ridiculed, have long vanished from public notice.  
 Those who had felt the mischief of discord, and the

*It is intended  
 to be a part of  
 a series of  
 papers*



tyranny of usurpation, read it with rapture, for every line brought back to memory something known, and gratified resentment by the just censure of something hated. But the book which was once quoted by princes, and which supplied conversation to all the assemblies 5 of the gay and witty, is now seldom mentioned, and even by those that affect to mention it, is seldom read. So vainly is wit lavished upon fugitive topics, so little can architecture secure duration when the ground is false! 10

No. 60. SATURDAY, *June 9, 1759*

CRITICISM is a study by which men grow important and formidable at a very small expense. The power of invention has been conferred by nature upon few, and the labor of learning those sciences which may, by mere labor, be obtained, is too great to be willingly 15 endured; but every man can exert such judgment as he has upon the works of others; and he whom nature has made weak, and idleness keeps ignorant, may yet support his vanity by the name of a critic.

I hope it will give comfort to great numbers who 20 are passing through the world in obscurity, when I inform them how easily distinction may be obtained. All the other powers of literature are coy and haughty; they must be long courted, and at last are not always gained; but Criticism is a goddess easy of access, and 25 forward of advance, who will meet the slow, and encourage the timorous; the want of meaning she supplies with words, and the want of spirit she recompenses with malignity.

This profession has one recommendation peculiar to 30 itself, that it gives vent to malignity without real mischief. No genius was ever blasted by the breath of critics. The poison which, if confined, would have burst the heart, fumes away in empty hisses, and malice is

set at ease with very little danger to merit. The critic is the only man whose triumph is without another's pain, and whose greatness does not rise upon another's ruin.

5 To a study at once so easy and so reputable, so malicious and so harmless, it cannot be necessary to invite my readers by a long or labored exhortation; it is sufficient, since all would be critics if they could, to show by one eminent example, that all can be critics if  
10 they will.

Dick Minim, after the common course of puerile studies, in which he was no great proficient, was put an apprentice to a brewer, with whom he had lived two years, when his uncle died in the city, and left  
15 him a large fortune in the stocks. Dick had for six months before used the company of the lower players, of whom he had learned to scorn a trade, and, being now at liberty to follow his genius, he resolved to be a man of wit and humor. That he might be properly  
20 initiated in his new character, he frequented the coffee-houses near the theatres, where he listened very diligently, day after day, to those who talked of language and sentiments, and unities and catastrophes, till by slow degrees he began to think that he understood some-  
25 thing of the stage, and hoped in time to talk himself.

But he did not trust so much to natural sagacity as wholly to neglect the help of books. When the theatres were shut, he retired to Richmond with a few select writers, whose opinions he impressed upon his  
30 memory by unwearied diligence; and, when he returned with other wits to the town, was able to tell, in very proper phrases, that the chief business of art is to copy nature; that a perfect writer is not to be expected, because genius decays as judgment increases; that the  
35 great art is the art of blotting; and that, according to the rule of Horace, every piece should be kept nine years.

Of the great authors he now began to display the characters, laying down, as an universal position, that all had beauties and defects. His opinion was that Shakspeare, committing himself wholly to the impulse of nature, wanted that correctness which learning would 5 have given him; and that Johnson, trusting to learning, did not sufficiently cast his eye on nature. He blamed the stanza of Spenser, and could not bear the hexameters of Sidney. Denham and Waller he held the first reformers of English numbers; and thought that 10 if Waller could have obtained the strength of Denham, or Denham the sweetness of Waller, there had been nothing wanting to complete a poet. He often expressed his commiseration of Dryden's poverty, and his indignation at the age which suffered him to write for 15 bread; he repeated with rapture the first lines of *All for Love*, but wondered at the corruption of taste which could bear any thing so unnatural as rhyming tragedies. In Otway he found uncommon powers of moving the passions, but was disgusted by his general negligence, 20 and blamed him for making a conspirator his hero; and never concluded his disquisition without remarking how happily the sound of the clock is made to alarm the audience. Southern would have been his favorite, but that he mixes comic with tragic scenes, intercepts 25 the natural course of the passions, and fills the mind with a wild confusion of mirth and melancholy. The versification of Rowe he thought too melodious for the stage, and too little varied in different passions. He made it the great fault of Congreve, that all his persons 30 were wits, and that he always wrote with more art than nature. He considered *Cato* rather as a poem than a play, and allowed Addison to be the complete master of allegory and grave humor, but paid no great deference to him as a critic. He thought the chief merit 35 of Prior was in his easy tales and lighter poems, though he allowed that his *Solomon* had many noble sentiments

elegantly expressed. In Swift he discovered an inimitable vein of irony, and an easiness which all would hope and few would attain. Pope he was inclined to degrade from a poet to a versifier, and thought his numbers 5 rather luscious than sweet. He often lamented the neglect of *Phædra and Hippolytus*, and wished to see the stage under better regulations.

These assertions passed commonly uncontradicted; and if now and then an opponent started up, he was 10 quickly repressed by the suffrages of the company, and Minim went away from every dispute with elation of heart and increase of confidence.

He now grew conscious of his abilities, and began to talk of the present state of dramatic poetry; wondered 15 what was become of the comic genius which supplied our ancestors with wit and pleasantry, and why no writer could be found that durst now venture beyond a farce. He saw no reason for thinking that the vein of humor was exhausted, since we live in a country 20 where liberty suffers every character to spread itself to its utmost bulk, and which therefore produces more originals than all the rest of the world together. Of tragedy he concluded business to be the soul, and yet often hinted that love predominates too much upon the 25 modern stage.

He was now an acknowledged critic, and had his own seat in a coffee-house, and headed a party in the pit. Minim has more vanity than ill-nature, and seldom desires to do much mischief; he will, perhaps, murmur a 30 little in the ear of him that sits next him, but endeavors to influence the audience to favor, by clapping when an actor exclaims, 'Ye gods!' or laments the misery of his country.

By degrees he was admitted to rehearsals; and many 35 of his friends are of opinion that our present poets are indebted to him for their happiest thoughts; by his contrivance the bell was rung twice in *Barbarossa*,

and by his persuasion the author of *Cleone* concluded his play without a couplet; for what can be more absurd, said Minim, than that part of a play should be rhymed, and part written in blank verse? And by what acquisition of faculties is the speaker, who never could find 5 rhymes before, enabled to rhyme at the conclusion of an act?

He is the great investigator of hidden beauties, and is particularly delighted when he finds 'the sound an echo to the sense.' He has read all our poets with 10 particular attention to this delicacy of versification, and wonders at the supineness with which their works have been hitherto perused, so that no man has found the sound of a drum in this distich:

And pulpit, drum ecclesiastic, 15  
Was beat with fist instead of a stick;

and that the wonderful lines upon honor and a bubble have hitherto passed without notice:

Honor is like the glassy bubble  
Which costs philosophers such trouble; 20  
Where, one part cracked, the whole does fly,  
And wits are cracked to find out why.

In these verses, says Minim, we have two striking accommodations of the sound to the sense. It is impossible to utter the two lines emphatically without 25 an act like that which they describe; *bubble* and *trouble* causing a momentary inflation of the cheeks by the retention of the breath, which is afterwards forcibly emitted, as in the practice of *blowing bubbles*. But the greatest excellence is in the third line, which is *cracked* 30 in the middle, to express a crack, and then *shivers* into monosyllables. Yet has this diamond lain neglected with common stones, and among the innumerable admirers of *Hudibras* the observation of this superlative passage has been reserved for the sagacity of Minim. 35

No. 61. SATURDAY, *June* 16, 1759

Mr. MINIM had now advanced himself to the zenith of critical reputation; when he was in the pit, every eye in the boxes was fixed upon him; when he entered his coffee-house, he was surrounded by circles of candidates, who passed their novitiate of literature under his tuition: his opinion was asked by all who had no opinion of their own, and yet loved to debate and decide; and no composition was supposed to pass in safety to posterity, till it had been secured by Minim's approbation.

Minim professes great admiration of the wisdom and munificence by which the academies of the continent were raised; and often wishes for some standard of taste, for some tribunal, to which merit may appeal from caprice, prejudice, and malignity. He has formed a plan for an academy of criticism, where every work of imagination may be read before it is printed, and which shall authoritatively direct the theatres what pieces to receive or reject, to exclude or to revive.

Such an institution would, in Dick's opinion, spread the fame of English literature over Europe, and make London the metropolis of elegance and politeness, the place to which the learned and ingenious of all countries would repair for instruction and improvement, and where nothing would any longer be applauded or endured that was not conformed to the nicest rules, and finished with the highest elegance.

Till some happy conjunction of the planets shall dispose our princes or ministers to make themselves immortal by such an academy, Minim contents himself to preside four nights in a week in a critical society selected by himself, where he is heard without contradiction, and whence his judgment is disseminated through 'the great vulgar and the small.'

When he is placed in the chair of criticism, he de-

clares loudly for the noble simplicity of our ancestors, in opposition to the petty refinements and ornamental luxuriance. Sometimes he is sunk in despair, and perceives false delicacy daily gaining ground, and sometimes brightens his countenance with a gleam of hope, 5 and predicts the revival of the true sublime. He then fulminates his loudest censures against the monkish barbarity of rhyme; wonders how beings that pretend to reason can be pleased with one line always ending like another; tells how unjustly and unnaturally sense is 10 sacrificed to sound; how often the best thoughts are mangled by the necessity of confining or extending them to the dimensions of a couplet; and rejoices that genius has, in our days, shaken off the shackles which had encumbered it so long. Yet he allows that rhyme may 15 sometimes be borne, if the lines be often broken, and the pauses judiciously diversified.

From blank verse he makes an easy transition to Milton, whom he produces as an example of the slow advance of lasting reputation. Milton is the only writer 20 in whose books Minion can read for ever without weariness. What cause it is that exempts this pressure from satiety he has long and diligently inquired, and believes it to consist in the perpetual variation of the numbers, by which the ear is gratified and the attention awakened. 25 The lines that are commonly thought rugged and unmusical, he conceives to have been written to temper the melodious luxury of the rest, or to express things by a proper cadence, for he scarcely finds a verse that has not this favorite beauty; he declares that he could 30 shiver in a hot-house when he reads that

the ground  
Burns froze, and cold performs th' effect of fire;

and that, when Milton bewails his blindness, the verse,

So thick a drop serene hath quenched their orbs

has, he knows not how, something that strikes him with an obscure sensation, like that which he fancies would be felt from the sound of darkness.

Minim is not so confident of his rules of judgment  
5 as not very eagerly to catch new light from the name of the author. He is commonly so prudent as to spare those whom he cannot resist, unless, as will sometimes happen, he finds the public combined against them. But a fresh pretender to fame he is strongly inclined  
10 to censure, till his own honor requires that he commend him. Till he knows the success of a composition, he intrenches himself in general terms: there are some new thoughts and beautiful passages, but there is likewise much which he would have advised the author  
15 to expunge. He has several favorite epithets, of which he has never settled the meaning, but which are very commodiously applied to books which he has not read, or cannot understand. One is *manly*, another is *dry*, another *stiff*, and another *flimsy*; sometimes he discovers  
20 delicacy of style, and sometimes meets with *strange expressions*.

He is never so great, or so happy, as when a youth of promising parts is brought to receive his directions for the prosecution of his studies. He then puts on a  
25 very serious air; he advises the pupil to read none but the best authors, and when he finds one congenial to his own mind, to study his beauties, but avoid his faults; and, when he sits down to write, to consider how his favorite author would think at the present  
30 time on the present occasion. He exhorts him to catch those moments when he finds his thoughts expanded and his genius exalted, but to take care lest imagination hurry him beyond the bounds of nature. He holds diligence the mother of success; yet enjoins him, with  
35 great earnestness, not to read more than he can digest, and not to confuse his mind by pursuing studies of contrary tendencies. He tells him that every man has



his genius, and that Cicero could never be a poet. The boy retires illuminated, resolves to follow his genius, and to think how Milton would have thought; and Minim feasts upon his own beneficence, till another day brings another pupil.

5

No. 88. SATURDAY, *December 22, 1759*

WHEN the philosophers of the last age were first congregated into the Royal Society, great expectations were raised of the sudden progress of useful arts; the time was supposed to be near, when engines should turn by a perpetual motion, and health be secured by the universal medicine; when learning should be facilitated by a real character, and commerce extended by ships which could reach their ports in defiance of the tempest.

But improvement is naturally slow. The Society met and parted without any visible diminution of the miseries of life. The gout and stone were still painful, the ground that was not plowed brought no harvest, and neither oranges nor grapes would grow upon the hawthorn. At last, those who were disappointed began to be angry; those likewise who hated innovation were glad to gain an opportunity of ridiculing men who had depreciated, perhaps with too much arrogance, the knowledge of antiquity. And it appears from some of their earliest apologies, that the philosophers felt with great sensibility the unwelcome importunities of those who were daily asking, 'What have ye done?'

The truth is, that little had been done compared with what fame had been suffered to promise; and the question could only be answered by general apologies and by new hopes, which, when they were frustrated, gave a new occasion to the same vexatious inquiry.

This fatal question has disturbed the quiet of many other minds. He that in the latter part of his life

too strictly inquires what he has done, can very seldom receive from his own heart such an account as will give him satisfaction.

We do not indeed so often disappoint others as ourselves. We not only think more highly than others of our own abilities, but allow ourselves to form hopes which we never communicate, and please our thoughts with employments which none ever will allot us, and with elevations to which we are never expected to rise; and when our days and years have passed away in common business or common amusements, and we find at last that we have suffered our purposes to sleep till the time of action is past, we are reproached only by our own reflections; neither our friends nor our enemies wonder that we live and die like the rest of mankind; that we live without notice, and die without memorial; they know not what task we had proposed, and therefore cannot discern whether it is finished.

He that compares what he has done with what he has left undone, will feel the effect which must always follow the comparison of imagination with reality; he will look with contempt on his own unimportance, and wonder to what purpose he came into the world; he will repine that he shall leave behind him no evidence of his having been, that he has added nothing to the system of life, but has glided from youth to age among the crowd, without any effort for distinction.

Man is seldom willing to let fall the opinion of his own dignity, or to believe that he does little only because every individual is a very little thing. He is better content to want diligence than power, and sooner confesses the depravity of his will than the imbecility of his nature.

From this mistaken notion of human greatness it proceeds that many who pretend to have made great advances in wisdom so loudly declare that they despise themselves. If I had ever found any of the self-con-

temners much irritated or pained by the consciousness of their meanness, I should have given them consolation by observing, that a little more than nothing is as much as can be expected from a being who with respect to the multitudes about him is himself little more 5 than nothing. Every man is obliged by the Supreme Master of the universe to improve all the opportunities of good which are afforded him, and to keep in continual activity such abilities as are bestowed upon him. But he has no reason to repine, though his abilities 10 are small and his opportunities few. He that has improved the virtue, or advanced the happiness, of one fellow-creature, he that has ascertained a single moral proposition, or added one useful experiment to natural knowledge, may be contented with his own performance, 15 and, with respect to mortals like himself, may demand, like Augustus, to be dismissed at his departure with applause.

No. 101. SATURDAY, *March 22, 1760*

OMAR, the son of Hassan, had passed seventy-five years in honor and prosperity. The favor of three 20 successive caliphs had filled his house with gold and silver; and whenever he appeared the benedictions of the people proclaimed his passage.

Terrestrial happiness is of short continuance. The brightness of the flame is wasting its fuel; the fragrant 25 flower is passing away in its own odors. The vigor of Omar began to fail, the curls of beauty fell from his head, strength departed from his hands, and agility from his feet. He gave back to the caliph the keys of trust and the seals of secrecy; and sought no other 30 pleasure for the remains of life than the converse of the wise, and the gratitude of the good.

The powers of his mind were yet unimpaired. His chamber was filled by visitants, eager to catch the dictates

of experience, and officious to pay the tribute of admiration. Caled, the son of the viceroy of Egypt, entered every day early, and retired late. He was beautiful and eloquent; Omar admired his wit, and loved his docility. 'Tell me,' said Caled, 'thou to whose voice nations have listened, and whose wisdom is known to the extremities of Asia, tell me how I may resemble Omar the prudent. The arts by which you have gained power and preserved it, are to you no longer necessary or useful; impart to me the secret of your conduct, and teach me the plan upon which your wisdom has built your fortune.'

'Young man,' said Omar, 'it is of little use to form plans of life. When I took my first survey of the world, in my twentieth year, having considered the various conditions of mankind, in the hour of solitude I said thus to myself, leaning against a cedar which spread its branches over my head: Seventy years are allowed to man; I have yet fifty remaining; ten years I will allot to the attainment of knowledge, and ten I will pass in foreign countries; I shall be learned, and therefore be honored; every city will shout at my arrival, and every student will solicit my friendship. Twenty years thus passed will store my mind with images which I shall be busy through the rest of my life in combining and comparing. I shall revel in inexhaustible accumulations of intellectual riches; I shall find new pleasures for every moment, and shall never more be weary of myself. I will, however, not deviate too far from the beaten track of life, but will try what can be found in female delicacy. I will marry a wife beautiful as the Houries, and wise as Zobeide; with her I will live twenty years within the suburbs of Bagdat, in every pleasure that wealth can purchase, and fancy can invent. I will then retire to a rural dwelling, pass my last days in obscurity and contemplation, and lie silently down on the bed of death. Through

my life it shall be my settled resolution, that I will never depend upon the smile of princes; that I will never stand exposed to the artifices of courts; I will never pant for public honors, nor disturb my quiet with affairs of state. Such was my scheme of life, 5 which I impressed indelibly upon my memory.

The first part of my ensuing time was to be spent in search of knowledge; and I know not how I was diverted from my design. I had no visible impediments without, nor any ungovernable passions within. I re- 10 garded knowledge as the highest honor and the most engaging pleasure; yet day stole upon day, and month glided after month, till I found that seven years of the first ten had vanished, and left nothing behind them. I now postponed my purpose of travelling; for why 15 should I go abroad while so much remained to be learned at home? I immured myself for four years, and studied the laws of the empire. The fame of my skill reached the judges; I was found able to speak upon doubtful questions, and was commanded to stand at the foot- 20 stool of the caliph. I was heard with attention, I was consulted with confidence, and the love of praise fastened on my heart.

I still wished to see distant countries, listened with rapture to the relations of travellers, and resolved some 25 time to ask my dismissal, that I might feast my soul with novelty; but my presence was always necessary, and the stream of business hurried me along. Sometimes I was afraid lest I should be charged with ingratitude; but I still proposed to travel, and therefore 30 would not confine myself by marriage.

In my fiftieth year I began to suspect that the time of travelling was past, and thought it best to lay hold on the felicity yet in my power, and indulge myself in domestic pleasures. But at fifty no man easily finds 35 a woman beautiful as the Houries, and wise as Zobeide. I inquired and rejected, consulted and deliberated, till

the sixty-second year made me ashamed of gazing upon girls. I had now nothing left but retirement, and for retirement I never found a time, till disease forced me from public employment.

5 Such was my scheme, and such has been its consequence. With an insatiable thirst for knowledge, I trifled away the years of improvement; with a restless desire of seeing different countries, I have always resided in the same city; with the highest expectation  
10 of connubial felicity, I have lived unmarried; and with unalterable resolutions of contemplative retirement, I am going to die within the walls of Bagdat.

## PREFATORY NOTE ON *THE LIFE OF SAVAGE*

Johnson's *Life of Savage*, though usually included among his *Lives of the Poets*, was written in 1744, long before any thought of that larger undertaking, and midway between his *London* and *The Vanity of Human Wishes*. The whole was written in thirty-six hours. 'I wrote forty-eight of the printed octavo pages of the *Life of Savage* at a sitting; but then I sat up all night' (*Life* l. 166). He was wretchedly poor. His wife, after they had sold all they had, was forced to take refuge with a friend. Johnson, too shabby to appear in company, was allowed to dine behind a screen at the house of his publisher, that he might hear his book praised in the table-talk of Cave's guests. Savage and he were comrades in destitution.

The book was highly praised; but what was worth more, some eight years later it won Johnson the friendship of Sir Joshua Reynolds, then just entering upon his great career. 'He met with it in Devonshire, knowing nothing of its author, and began to read it while he was standing with his arm leaning against a chimney-piece. It seized his attention so strongly, that, not being able to lay the book down till he had finished it, when he attempted to move, he found his arm totally benumbed' (*Life* l. 165).

The *Life of Savage* has the advantage over Johnson's other biographical writings that he knew Savage well and loved him. Aside from Savage's impudence and irresponsibility, the two men had many traits in common. Johnson's account is full of feeling, though sometimes a little too much governed by consciousness of his championship for his irregular friend.

## The Life of Savage

It has been observed in all ages, that the advantages of nature or of fortune have contributed very little to the promotion of happiness; and that those whom the splendor of their rank, or the extent of their capacity, have placed upon the summits of human life, have not often given any just occasion to envy in those who look up to them from a lower station; whether it be that apparent superiority incites great designs, and great designs are naturally liable to fatal miscarriages, 10 or that the general lot of mankind is misery, and the misfortunes of those whose eminence drew upon them an universal attention, have been more carefully recorded, because they were more generally observed, and have in reality been only more conspicuous than those 15 of others, not more frequent, or more severe.

That affluence and power, advantages extrinsic and adventitious, and therefore easily separable from those by whom they are possessed, should very often flatter the mind with expectations of felicity which they cannot 20 give raises no astonishment; but it seems rational to hope, that intellectual greatness should produce better effects; that minds qualified for great attainments should first endeavor their own benefit; and that they, who are most able to teach others the way to happiness, 25 should with most certainty follow it themselves.

But this expectation, however plausible, has been very frequently disappointed. The heroes of literary as well as civil history, have been very often no less remarkable for what they have suffered, than for what they have



achieved; and volumes have been written only to enumerate the miseries of the learned, and relate their unhappy lives, and untimely deaths.

To these mournful narratives, I am about to add the *Life of Richard Savage*, a man whose writings entitle him to an eminent rank in the classes of learning, and whose misfortunes claim a degree of compassion, not always due to the unhappy, as they were often the consequences of the crimes of others, rather than his own. 10

In the year 1697, Anne, Countess of Macclesfield, having lived for some time upon very uneasy terms with her husband, thought a public confession of adultery the most obvious and expeditious method of obtaining her liberty; and therefore declared, that the child with which she was then great, was begotten by the Earl Rivers. This, as may be imagined, made her husband no less desirous of a separation than herself, and he prosecuted his design in the most effectual manner; for he applied not to the ecclesiastical courts for a divorce, but to the Parliament for an act by which his marriage might be dissolved, the nuptial contract totally annulled, and the children of his wife illegitimated. This act, after the usual deliberation, he obtained, though without the approbation of some, who considered marriage as an affair only cognizable by ecclesiastical judges;<sup>1</sup> and on March 3d was separated from his wife, whose fortune, which was very great, was repaid her, and who having, as well as her husband, the liberty of 25

<sup>1</sup> This year was made remarkable by the dissolution of a marriage solemnized in the face of the church. SALMON'S REVIEW.

The following protest is registered in the books of the House of Lords:—  
Dissentient.

Because we conceive that this is the first bill of that nature that hath passed, where there was not a divorce first obtained in the spiritual court; which we look upon as an ill precedent, and may be of dangerous consequence in the future.

HALIFAX. ROCHESTER.

making another choice, was in a short time married to Colonel Brett.

While the Earl of Macclesfield was prosecuting this affair, his wife was, on the 10th of January, 1697-8, delivered of a son; and the Earl Rivers, by appearing to consider him as his own, left none any reason to doubt of the sincerity of her declaration; for he was his godfather, and gave him his own name, which was by his direction inserted in the register of St. Andrew's parish in Holborn, but unfortunately left him to the care of his mother, whom, as she was now set free from her husband, he probably imagined likely to treat with great tenderness the child that had contributed to so pleasing an event. It is not indeed easy to discover what motives could be found to overbalance that natural affection of a parent, or what interest could be promoted by neglect or cruelty. The dread of shame or of poverty, by which some wretches have been incited to abandon or to murder their children, cannot be supposed to have affected a woman who had proclaimed her crimes and solicited reproach, and on whom the clemency of the legislature had undeservedly bestowed a fortune, which would have been very little diminished by the expenses which the care of her child could have brought upon her. It was therefore not likely that she would be wicked without temptation; that she would look upon her son from his birth with a kind of resentment and abhorrence; and, instead of supporting, assisting, and defending him, delight to see him struggling with misery, or that she would take every opportunity of aggravating his misfortunes, and obstructing his resources, and with an implacable and restless cruelty continue her persecution from the first hour of his life to the last.

But whatever were her motives, no sooner was her son born, than she discovered a resolution of disowning him; and in a very short time removed him from her

sight, by committing him to the care of a poor woman, whom she directed to educate him as her own, and enjoined never to inform him of his true parents.

Such was the beginning of the life of Richard Savage. Born with a legal claim to honor and to affluence, he 5 was in two months illegitimated by the Parliament, and disowned by his mother, doomed to poverty and obscurity, and launched upon the ocean of life, only that he might be swallowed by its quicksands, or dashed upon its rocks. 10

His mother could not indeed infect others with the same cruelty. As it was impossible to avoid the inquiries which the curiosity or tenderness of her relations made after her child, she was obliged to give some account of the measures that she had taken; and her 15 mother, the Lady Mason, whether in approbation of her design, or to prevent more criminal contrivances, engaged to transact with the nurse, to pay her for her care, and to superintend the education of the child.

In this charitable office she was assisted by his god- 20 mother Mrs. Lloyd, who, while she lived, always looked upon him with that tenderness which the barbarity of his mother made peculiarly necessary; but her death, which happened in his tenth year, was another of the misfortunes of his childhood; for though she kindly 25 endeavored to alleviate his loss by a legacy of three hundred pounds, yet, as he had none to prosecute his claim, to shelter him from oppression, or call in law to the assistance of justice, her will was eluded by the executors, and no part of the money was ever paid. 30

He was, however, not yet wholly abandoned. The Lady Mason still continued her care, and directed him to be placed at a small grammar-school near St. Alban's, where he was called by the name of his nurse, without the least intimation that he had a claim to any other. 35

Here he was initiated in literature, and passed through several of the classes, with what rapidity or with what

applause cannot now be known. As he always spoke with respect of his master, it is probable that the mean rank in which he then appeared did not hinder his genius from being distinguished, or his industry from being rewarded; and if in so low a state he obtained distinction and rewards, it is not likely that they were gained but by genius and industry.

It is very reasonable to conjecture that his application was equal to his abilities, because his improvement was more than proportioned to the opportunities which he enjoyed; nor can it be doubted that if his earliest productions had been preserved, like those of happier students, we might in some have found vigorous sallies of that sprightly humor which distinguishes *The Author to be let*, and in others strong touches of that ardent imagination which painted the solemn scenes of *The Wanderer*.

While he was thus cultivating his genius, his father the Earl Rivers was seized with a distemper, which in a short time put an end to his life. He had frequently inquired after his son, and had always been amused with fallacious and evasive answers; but, being now in his own opinion on his death-bed, he thought it his duty to provide for him among his other natural children, and therefore demanded a positive account of him, with an importunity not to be diverted or denied. His mother, who could no longer refuse an answer, determined at least to give such as should cut him off for ever from that happiness which competence affords, and therefore declared that he was dead; which is perhaps the first instance of a lie invented by a mother to deprive her son of a provision which was designed him by another, and which she could not expect herself, though he should lose it.

This was therefore an act of wickedness which could not be defeated, because it could not be suspected; the earl did not imagine that there could exist in a human

form a mother that would ruin her son without enriching herself, and therefore bestowed upon some other person six thousand pounds, which he had in his will bequeathed to Savage.

The same cruelty which incited his mother to inter- 5 cept this provision which had been intended him, prompted her in a short time to another project, a project worthy of such a disposition. She endeavored to rid herself from the danger of being at any time made known to him, by sending him secretly to the 10 American Plantations.<sup>1</sup>

By whose kindness this scheme was counteracted, or by what interposition she was induced to lay aside her design, I know not; it is not improbable that the Lady Mason might persuade or compel her to desist, or per- 15 haps she could not easily find accomplices wicked enough to concur in so cruel an action; for it may be conceived that those who had by a long gradation of guilt hardened their hearts against the sense of common wickedness, would yet be shocked at the design of a mother 20 to expose her son to slavery and want, to expose him without interest, and without provocation; and Savage might on this occasion find protectors and advocates among those who had long traded in crimes, and whom compassion had never touched before. 25

Being hindered, by whatever means, from banishing him into another country, she formed soon after a scheme for burying him in poverty and obscurity in his own; and, that his station of life, if not the place of his residence might keep him for ever at a distance from 30 her, she ordered him to be placed with a shoemaker in Holborn, that, after the usual time of trial, he might become his apprentice.<sup>2</sup>

It is generally reported, that this project was for some time successful, and that Savage was employed at 35

<sup>1</sup> Savage's *Preface to his Miscellany*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

the awl longer than he was willing to confess; nor was it perhaps any great advantage to him, that an unexpected discovery determined him to quit his occupation.

5 About this time his nurse, who had always treated him as her own son, died; and it was natural for him to take care of those effects which by her death were, as he imagined, become his own: he therefore went to her house, opened her boxes, and examined her papers, 10 among which he found some letters written to her by the lady Mason, which informed him of his birth, and the reasons for which it was concealed.

He was no longer satisfied with the employment which had been allotted him, but thought he had a right to 15 share the affluence of his mother; and therefore without scruple applied to her as her son, and made use of every art to awaken her tenderness, and attract her regard. But neither his letters, nor the interposition of those friends which his merit or his distress pro- 20 cured him, made any impression upon her mind. She still resolved to neglect, though she could no longer disown him.

It was to no purpose that he frequently solicited her to admit him to see her; she avoided him with the most 25 vigilant precaution, and ordered him to be excluded from her house, by whomsoever he might be introduced, and what reason soever he might give for entering it.

Savage was at the same time so touched with the discovery of his real mother, that it was his frequent prac- 30 tice to walk in the dark evenings<sup>1</sup> for several hours before her door, in hopes of seeing her as she might come by accident to the window, or cross her apartment with a candle in her hand.

But all his assiduity and tenderness were without 35 effect, for he could neither soften her heart nor open her hand, and was reduced to the utmost miseries of

<sup>1</sup> See the *Plain Dealer*.

want, while he was endeavoring to awaken the affections of a mother. He was therefore obliged to seek some other means of support; and, having no profession, became by necessity an author.

At this time the attention of all the literary world was engrossed by the Bangorian controversy, which filled the press with pamphlets, and the coffee-houses with disputants. Of this subject, as most popular, he made choice for his first attempt, and, without any other knowledge of the question than he had casually collected from conversation, published a poem against the Bishop.

What was the success or merit of this performance, I know not; it was probably lost among the innumerable pamphlets to which that dispute gave occasion. Mr. Savage was himself in a little time ashamed of it, and endeavored to suppress it, by destroying all the copies that he could collect.

He then attempted a more gainful kind of writing,<sup>1</sup> and in his eighteenth year offered to the stage a comedy borrowed from a Spanish plot, which was refused by the players, and was therefore given by him to Mr. Bullock, who, having more interest, made some slight alterations, and brought it upon the stage under the title of *Woman's a Riddle*,<sup>2</sup> but allowed the unhappy author no part of the profit.

Not discouraged, however, at his repulse, he wrote two years afterwards *Love in a Veil*, another comedy, borrowed likewise from the Spanish, but with little better success than before; for though it was received and acted, yet it appeared so late in the year, that the author obtained no other advantage from it, than the acquaintance of Sir Richard Steele, and Mr. Wilks, by whom he was pitied, caressed, and relieved.

Sir Richard Steele, having declared in his favor with

<sup>1</sup> Jacob's *Lives of the Dramatic Poets*.

<sup>2</sup> This play was printed first in 8vo.; and afterwards in 12mo. the fifth edition.

all the ardor of benevolence which constituted his character, promoted his interest with the utmost zeal, related his misfortunes, applauded his merit, took all the opportunities of recommending him, and asserted, that  
5 'the inhumanity of his mother had given him a right to find every good man his father.'<sup>1</sup>

Nor was Mr. Savage admitted to his acquaintance only, but to his confidence, of which he sometimes related an instance too extraordinary to be omitted, as it affords  
10 a very just idea of his patron's character.

He was once desired by Sir Richard, with an air of the utmost importance, to come very early to his house the next morning. Mr. Savage came as he had promised, found the chariot at the door, and Sir Richard  
15 waiting for him, and ready to go out. What was intended, and whither they were to go, Savage could not conjecture, and was not willing to inquire; but immediately seated himself with Sir Richard. The coachman was ordered to drive, and they hurried with the  
20 utmost expedition to Hyde-Park-corner, where they stopped at a petty tavern, and retired to a private room. Sir Richard then informed him, that he intended to publish a pamphlet, and that he had desired him to come thither that he might write for him. They  
25 soon sat down to the work. Sir Richard dictated, and Savage wrote, till the dinner that had been ordered was put upon the table. Savage was surprised at the meanness of the entertainment, and after some hesitation ventured to ask for wine, which Sir Richard, not with-  
30 out reluctance, ordered to be brought. They then finished their dinner, and proceeded in their pamphlet, which they concluded in the afternoon.

Mr. Savage then imagined his task over, and expected that Sir Richard would call for the reckoning, and re-  
35 turn home; but his expectations deceived him, for Sir Richard told him that he was without money, and that

<sup>1</sup> *Plain Dealer.*



the pamphlet must be sold before the dinner could be paid for; and Savage was therefore obliged to go and offer their new production to sale for two guineas, which with some difficulty he obtained. Sir Richard then returned home, having retired that day only to avoid his creditors, and composed the pamphlet only to discharge his reckoning.

Mr. Savage related another fact equally uncommon, which, though it has no relation to his life, ought to be preserved. Sir Richard Steele having one day invited to his house a great number of persons of the first quality, they were surprised at the number of liveries which surrounded the table; and after dinner, when wine and mirth had set them free from the observation of rigid ceremony, one of them inquired of Sir Richard, how such an expensive train of domestics could be consistent with his fortune. Sir Richard very frankly confessed that they were fellows of whom he would very willingly be rid. And being then asked why he did not discharge them, declared that they were bailiffs, who had introduced themselves with an execution, and whom, since he could not send them away, he had thought it convenient to embellish with liveries, that they might do him credit while they staid.

His friends were diverted with the expedient, and by paying the debt discharged their attendance, having obliged Sir Richard to promise that they should never again find him graced with a retinue of the same kind.

Under such a tutor Mr. Savage was not likely to learn prudence or frugality; and perhaps many of the misfortunes which the want of those virtues brought upon him in the following parts of his life, might be justly imputed to so unimproving an example.

Nor did the kindness of Sir Richard end in common favors. He proposed to have established him in some settled scheme of life, and to have contracted a kind of alliance with him, by marrying him to a natural daugh-

ter, on whom he intended to bestow a thousand pounds. But, though he was always lavish of future bounties, he conducted his affairs in such a manner, that he was very seldom able to keep his promises, or execute his  
5 own intentions; and, as he was never able to raise the sum which he had offered, the marriage was delayed. In the mean time he was officiously informed, that Mr. Savage had ridiculed him; by which he was so much exasperated, that he withdrew the allowance which he  
10 had paid him, and never afterwards admitted him to his house.

It is not indeed unlikely that Savage might by his imprudence expose himself to the malice of a tale-bearer: for his patron had many follies, which, as his discern-  
15 ment easily discovered, his imagination might sometimes incite him to mention too ludicrously. A little knowledge of the world is sufficient to discover that such weakness is very common, and that there are few who do not sometimes, in the wantonness of thoughtless  
20 mirth, or the heat of transient resentment, speak of their friends and benefactors with levity and contempt, though in their cooler moments they want neither sense of their kindness, nor reverence for their virtue. The fault therefore of Mr. Savage was rather negligence  
25 than ingratitude. But Sir Richard must likewise be acquitted of severity, for who is there that can patiently bear contempt from one whom he has relieved and supported, whose establishment he has labored, and whose interest he has promoted?

30 He was now again abandoned to fortune, without any other friend than Mr. Wilks, a man who, whatever were his abilities or skill as an actor, deserves at least to be remembered for his virtues,<sup>1</sup> which are not often

<sup>1</sup> As it is a loss to mankind when any good action is forgotten, I shall insert another instance of Mr. Wilks's generosity, very little known. Mr. Smith, a gentleman educated at Dublin, being hindered by an impediment in his pronunciation from engaging in orders, for which his friends designed him, left his own country, and came to London in quest of employment, but

to be found in the world, and perhaps less often in his profession than in others. To be humane, generous, and candid, is a very high degree of merit in any case; but those qualities deserve still greater praise, when they are found in that condition which makes almost every other man, for whatever reason, contemptuous, insolent, petulant, selfish, and brutal.

As Mr. Wilks was one of those to whom calamity seldom complained without relief, he naturally took an unfortunate wit into his protection, and not only assisted him in any casual distresses, but continued an equal and steady kindness to the time of his death.

By his interposition Mr. Savage once obtained from his mother fifty pounds, and a promise of one hundred and fifty more; but it was the fate of this unhappy man, that few promises of any advantage to him were performed. His mother was infected, among others, with the general madness of the South Sea traffic; and, having been disappointed in her expectations, refused to pay what perhaps nothing but the prospect of sudden affluence prompted her to promise.

Being thus obliged to depend upon the friendship of Mr. Wilks, he was consequently an assiduous frequenter of the theatres; and in a short time the amusements of the stage took such possession of his mind, that he never was absent from a play in several years.

This constant attendance naturally procured him the found his solicitations fruitless, and his necessities every day more pressing. In this distress he wrote a tragedy, and offered it to the players, by whom it was rejected. Thus were his last hopes defeated, and he had no other prospect than of the most deplorable poverty. But Mr. Wilks thought his performance, though not perfect, at least worthy of some reward, and therefore offered him a benefit. This favor he improved with so much diligence, that the house afforded him a considerable sum, with which he went to Leyden, applied himself to the study of physic, and prosecuted his design with so much diligence and success, that, when Dr. Boerhaave was desired by the Czarina to recommend proper persons to introduce into Russia the practice and study of physic, Dr. Smith was one of those whom he selected. He had a considerable pension settled on him at his arrival, and was one of the chief physicians at the Russian court.

acquaintance of the players, and among others, of Mrs. Oldfield, who was so much pleased with his conversation, and touched with his misfortunes, that she allowed him a settled pension of fifty pounds a year, which was 5 during her life regularly paid.

That this act of generosity may receive its due praise, and that the good actions of Mrs. Oldfield may not be sullied by her general character, it is proper to mention what Mr. Savage often declared in the strongest terms, 10 that he never saw her alone, or in any other place than behind the scenes.

At her death he endeavored to show his gratitude in the most decent manner, by wearing mourning as for a mother; but did not celebrate her in elegies, because he 15 knew that too great profusion of praise would only have revived those faults which his natural equity did not allow him to think less, because they were committed by one who favored him; but of which, though his virtue would not endeavor to palliate them, his grati- 20 tude would not suffer him to prolong the memory, or diffuse the censure.

In his *Wanderer*, he has indeed taken an opportunity of mentioning her; but celebrates her not for her virtue, but her beauty, an excellence which none ever denied 25 her; this is the only encomium with which he has rewarded her liberality, and perhaps he has even in this been too lavish of his praise. He seems to have thought, that never to mention his benefactress would have an appearance of ingratitude, though to have dedicated any 30 particular performance to her memory would have only betrayed an officious partiality, that, without exalting her character, would have depressed his own.

He had sometimes, by the kindness of Mr. Wilks, the advantage of a benefit, on which occasions he often re- 35 ceived uncommon marks of regard and compassion; and was once told by the Duke of Dorset, that it was just to consider him as an injured nobleman, and that

in his opinion the nobility ought to think themselves obliged, without solicitation, to take every opportunity of supporting him by their countenance and patronage. But he had generally the mortification to hear that the whole interest of his mother was employed to frustrate 5 his applications, and that she never left any expedient untried, by which he might be cut off from the possibility of supporting life. The same disposition she endeavored to diffuse among all those over whom nature or fortune gave her any influence, and indeed succeeded 10 too well in her design; but could not always propagate her effrontery with her cruelty; for some of those whom she incited against him were ashamed of their own conduct, and boasted of that relief which they never gave him. 15

In this censure I do not indiscriminately involve all his relations; for he has mentioned with gratitude the humanity of one lady whose name I am now unable to recollect, and to whom therefore I cannot pay the praises which she deserves for having acted well in 20 opposition to influence, precept, and example.

The punishment which our laws inflict upon those parents who murder their infants is well known, nor has its justice ever been contested; but if they deserve death who destroy a child in its birth, what pains can 25 be severe enough for her who forbears to destroy him only to inflict sharper miseries upon him; who prolongs his life only to make him miserable; and who exposes him, without care and without pity, to the malice of oppression, the caprices of chance, and the temptations 30 of poverty; who rejoices to see him overwhelmed with calamities; and, when his own industry, or the charity of others, has enabled him to rise for a short time above his miseries, plunges him again into his former distress?

The kindness of his friends not affording him any 35 constant supply, and the prospect of improving his fortune by enlarging his acquaintance, necessarily lead-

ing him to places of expense, he found it necessary<sup>1</sup> to endeavor once more at dramatic poetry, for which he was now better qualified by a more extensive knowledge and longer observation. But having been unsuccessful in comedy, though rather for want of opportunities than genius, he resolved now to try whether he should not be more fortunate in exhibiting a tragedy.

The story which he chose for the subject, was that of *Sir Thomas Overbury*, a story well adapted to the stage, though perhaps not far enough removed from the present age to admit properly the fictions necessary to complete the plan; for the mind, which naturally loves truth, is always most offended with the violation of those truths of which we are most certain; and we of course conceive those facts most certain which approach nearest to our own time.

Out of this story he formed a tragedy, which, if the circumstances in which he wrote it be considered, will afford at once an uncommon proof of strength of genius, and evenness of mind, of a serenity not to be ruffled, and an imagination not to be suppressed.

During a considerable part of the time in which he was employed upon this performance, he was without lodging, and often without meat; nor had he any other conveniences for study than the fields or the street allowed him; there he used to walk and form his speeches, and afterwards step into a shop, beg for a few moments the use of the pen and ink, and write down what he had composed upon paper which he had picked up by accident.

If the performance of a writer thus distressed is not perfect, its faults ought surely to be imputed to a cause very different from want of genius, and must rather excite pity than provoke censure.

But when under these discouragements the tragedy was finished, there yet remained the labor of introducing

<sup>1</sup> In 1724.

it on the stage, an undertaking which, to an ingenuous mind, was in a very high degree vexatious and disgusting; for, having little interest or reputation, he was obliged to submit himself wholly to the players, and admit, with whatever reluctance, the emendations of 5 Mr. Cibber, which he always considered as the disgrace of his performance.

He had indeed in Mr. Hill another critic of a very different class, from whose friendship he received great assistance on many occasions, and whom he never men- 10 tioned but with the utmost tenderness and regard. He had been for some time distinguished by him with very particular kindness, and on this occasion it was natural to apply to him as an author of an established character. He therefore sent this tragedy to him, with 15 a short copy of verses,<sup>1</sup> in which he desired his correction. Mr. Hill, whose humanity and politeness are generally known, readily complied with his request; but as he is remarkable for singularity of sentiment, and bold experiments in language, Mr. Savage did not think 20 his play much improved by his innovation, and had even at that time the courage to reject several passages which he could not approve; and, what is still more laudable, Mr. Hill had the generosity not to resent the neglect of his alterations, but wrote the prologue 25 and epilogue, in which he touches on the circumstances of the author with great tenderness.

After all these obstructions and compliances, he was only able to bring his play upon the stage in the summer, when the chief actors had retired, and the rest 30 were in possession of the house for their own advantage. Among these, Savage was admitted to play the part of Sir Thomas Overbury, by which he gained no great reputation, the theatre being a province for which nature seemed not to have designed him; for neither 35 his voice, look, nor gesture, were such as are expected

<sup>1</sup> Printed in the late Collection of his Poems.

on the stage; and he was so much ashamed of having been reduced to appear as a player, that he always blotted out his name from the list, when a copy of his tragedy was to be shown to his friends.

5 In the publication of his performance he was more successful, for the rays of genius that glimmered in it, that glimmered through all the mists which poverty and Cibber had been able to spread over it, procured him the notice and esteem of many persons eminent for  
10 their rank, their virtue, and their wit.

Of this play, acted, printed, and dedicated, the accumulated profits arose to an hundred pounds, which he thought at that time a very large sum, having been never master of so much before.

15 In the Dedication,<sup>1</sup> for which he received ten guineas, there is nothing remarkable. The Preface contains a very liberal encomium on the blooming excellencies of Mr. Theophilus Cibber, which Mr. Savage could not in the latter part of his life see his friends about to read  
20 without snatching the play out of their hands. The generosity of Mr. Hill did not end on this occasion; for afterwards, when Mr. Savage's necessities returned, he encouraged a subscription to a *Miscellany of Poems* in a very extraordinary manner, by publishing his story  
25 in *The Plain Dealer*,<sup>2</sup> with some affecting lines, which he asserts to have been written by Mr. Savage upon the treatment received by him from his mother, but of which he was himself the author, as Mr. Savage afterwards declared. These lines, and the paper in which they  
30 were inserted, had a very powerful effect upon all but his mother, whom, by making her cruelty more public, they only hardened in her aversion.

Mr. Hill not only promoted the subscription to the

<sup>1</sup> To Herbert Tryst, Esq. of Herefordshire.

<sup>2</sup> The *Plain Dealer* was a periodical paper, written by Mr. Hill and Mr. Bond, whom Mr. Savage called the two contending powers of light and darkness. They wrote by turns each six essays; and the character of the work was observed regularly to rise in Mr. Hill's weeks, and fall in Mr. Bond's.



*Miscellany*, but furnished likewise the greatest part of the poems of which it is composed, and particularly *The Happy Man*, which he published as a specimen.

The subscriptions of those whom these papers should influence to patronise merit in distress, without any other solicitation, were directed to be left at Button's coffee-house; and Mr. Savage going thither a few days afterwards, without expectation of any effect from his proposal, found to his surprise seventy guineas,<sup>1</sup> which had been sent him in consequence of the compassion excited 10 by Mr. Hill's pathetic representation.

To this *Miscellany* he wrote a preface, in which he gives an account of his mother's cruelty in a very uncommon strain of humor, and with a gaiety of imagination which the success of his subscription probably 15 produced.

The Dedication is addressed to the lady Mary Wortley Montague, whom he flatters without reserve; and to confess the truth, with very little art.<sup>2</sup> The same observation may be extended to all his dedications: his 20 compliments are constrained and violent, heaped together without the grace of order, or the decency of

<sup>1</sup> The names of those who so generously contributed to his relief having been mentioned in a former account, ought not to be omitted here. They were the Duchess of Cleveland, Lady Cheyney, Lady Castlemain, Lady Gower, Lady Lechmere, the Duchess-dowager and Duchess of Rutland, Lady Strafford, the Countess-Dowager of Warwick, Mrs. Mary Floyer, Mrs. Sofuel Noel, Duke of Rutland, Lord Gainsborough, Lord Milsington, Mr. John Savage.

<sup>2</sup> This the following extract from it will prove:

'Since our country has been honoured with the glory of your wit, as elevated and immortal as your soul, it no longer remains a doubt whether your sex have strength of mind in proportion to their sweetness. There is something in your verses as distinguished as your air.—They are as strong as truth, as deep as reason, as clear as innocence, and as smooth as beauty.—They contain a nameless and peculiar mixture of force and grace, which is at once so movingly serene, and so majestically lovely, that it is too amiable to appear any where but in your eyes and in your writings.

'As fortune is not more my enemy than I am the enemy of flattery, I know not how I can forbear this application to your Ladyship, because there is scarce a possibility that I should say more than I believe, when I am speaking of your excellence.'

introduction; he seems to have written his panegyrics for the perusal only of his patrons, and to have imagined that he had no other task than to pamper them with praises however gross, and that flattery would make its way to the heart, without the assistance of elegance or invention.

Soon afterwards the death of the king furnished a general subject for a poetical contest, in which Mr. Savage engaged, and is allowed to have carried the prize of honor from his competitors: but I know not whether he gained by his performance any other advantage than the increase of his reputation; though it must certainly have been with farther views that he prevailed upon himself to attempt a species of writing, of which all the topics had been long before exhausted, and which was made at once difficult by the multitudes that had failed in it, and those that had succeeded.

He was now advancing in reputation, and though frequently involved in very distressful perplexities, appeared however to be gaining upon mankind, when both his fame and his life were endangered by an event of which it is not yet determined whether it ought to be mentioned as a crime or a calamity.

On the 20th of November, 1727, Mr. Savage came from Richmond, where he then lodged, that he might pursue his studies with less interruption, with an intent to discharge another lodging which he had in Westminster; and accidentally meeting two gentlemen his acquaintances, whose names were Merchant and Gregory, he went in with them to a neighboring coffee-house, and sat drinking till it was late, it being in no time of Mr. Savage's life any part of his character to be the first of the company that desired to separate. He would willingly have gone to bed in the same house; but there was not room for the whole company, and therefore they agreed to ramble about the streets, and divert them-

selves with such amusements as should offer themselves till morning.

In this walk they happened unluckily to discover a light in Robinson's coffee-house, near Charing-cross, and therefore went in. Merchant with some rudeness demanded a room, and was told that there was a good fire in the next parlor, which the company were about to leave, being then paying their reckoning. Merchant, not satisfied with this answer, rushed into the room, and was followed by his companions. He then petu- 10 lantly placed himself between the company and the fire, and soon after kicked down the table. This produced a quarrel, swords were drawn on both sides, and one Mr. James Sinclair was killed. Savage, having wounded likewise a maid that held him, forced his way 15 with Merchant out of the house; but being intimidated and confused, without resolution either to fly or stay, they were taken in a back court by one of the company, and some soldiers, whom he had called to his assistance.

Being secured and guarded that night, they were in 20 the morning carried before three justices, who committed them to the Gatehouse, from whence, upon the death of Mr. Sinclair, which happened the same day, they were removed in the night to Newgate, where they were however treated with some distinction, exempted 25 from the ignominy of chains, and confined, not among the common criminals, but in the press-yard.

When the day of trial came, the court was crowded in a very unusual manner; and the public appeared to interest itself as in a cause of general concern. The 30 witnesses against Mr. Savage and his friends were, the woman who kept the house, which was a house of ill fame, and her maid, the men who were in the room with Mr. Sinclair, and a woman of the town, who had been drinking with them, and with whom one of them 35 had been seen in bed. They swore in general, that Merchant gave the provocation, which Savage and Gregory

drew their swords to justify; that Savage drew first, and that he stabbed Sinclair when he was not in a posture of defense, or while Gregory commanded his sword; that after he had given the thrust he turned pale, and would have retired, but that the maid clung round him, and one of the company endeavored to detain him, from whom he broke, by cutting the maid on the head, but was afterwards taken in a court.

There was some difference in their depositions; one did not see Savage give the wound, another saw it given when Sinclair held his point towards the ground; and the woman of the town asserted, that she did not see Sinclair's sword at all: this difference however was very far from amounting to inconsistency; but it was sufficient to show that the hurry of the dispute was such, that it was not easy to discover the truth with relation to particular circumstances, and that therefore some deductions were to be made from the credibility of the testimonies.

20 Sinclair had declared several times before his death, that he received his wound from Savage; nor did Savage at his trial deny the fact, but endeavored partly to extenuate it, by urging the suddenness of the whole action, and the impossibility of any ill design, or pre-  
25 meditated malice; and partly to justify it by the necessity of self-defense, and the hazard of his own life, if he had lost that opportunity of giving the thrust: he observed, that neither reason nor law obliged a man to wait for the blow which was threatened, and which,  
30 if he should suffer it, he might never be able to return; that it was always allowable to prevent an assault, and to preserve life by taking away that of the adversary by whom it was endangered.

With regard to the violence with which he endeavored  
35 to escape, he declared, that it was not his design to fly from justice, or decline a trial, but to avoid the expenses and severities of a prison; and that he

intended to have appeared at the bar without compulsion.

This defense, which took up more than an hour, was heard by the multitude that thronged the court with the most attentive and respectful silence: those who 5 thought he ought not to be acquitted, owned that applause could not be refused him; and those who before pitied his misfortunes, now revered his abilities.

The witnesses which appeared against him were proved to be persons of characters which did not entitle them 10 to much credit: a common strumpet, a woman by whom strumpets were entertained, and a man by whom they were supported; and the character of Savage was by several persons of distinction asserted to be that of a modest inoffensive man, not inclined to broils or to 15 insolence, and who had, to that time, been only known for his misfortunes and his wit.

Had his audience been his judges, he had undoubtedly been acquitted; but Sir Francis Page, who was then upon the bench, treated him with his usual insolence and 20 severity, and when he had summed up the evidence, endeavored to exasperate the jury, as Mr. Savage used to relate it, with this eloquent harangue:

‘Gentlemen of the jury, you are to consider that Mr. Savage is a very great man, a much greater man 25 than you or I, gentlemen of the jury; that he wears very fine clothes, much finer clothes than you or I, gentlemen of the jury; that he has abundance of money in his pocket, much more money than you or I, gentlemen of the jury; but, gentlemen of the jury, is it not 30 a very hard case, gentlemen of the jury, that Mr. Savage should therefore kill you or me, gentlemen of the jury?’

Mr. Savage hearing his defense thus misrepresented, and the men who were to decide his fate incited against 35 him by invidious comparisons, resolutely asserted, that his cause was not candidly explained, and began to

recapitulate what he had before said with regard to his condition, and the necessity of endeavoring to escape the expenses of imprisonment; but the judge having ordered him to be silent, and repeated his orders without effect, commanded that he should be taken from the bar by force.

The jury then heard the opinion of the judge, that good characters were of no weight against positive evidence, though they might turn the scale where it was doubtful; and that though, when two men attack each other, the death of either is only manslaughter; but where one is the aggressor, as in the case before them, and, in pursuance of his first attack, kills the other, the law supposes the action, however sudden, to be malicious. They then deliberated upon their verdict, and determined that Mr. Savage and Mr. Gregory were guilty of murder; and Mr. Merchant, who had no sword, only of manslaughter.

Thus ended this memorable trial, which lasted eight hours. Mr. Savage and Mr. Gregory were conducted back to prison, where they were more closely confined, and loaded with irons of fifty pounds weight; four days afterwards they were sent back to the court to receive sentence; on which occasion Mr. Savage made, as far as it could be retained in memory, the following speech:

‘It is now, my lord, too late to offer any thing by way of defense or vindication; nor can we expect from your lordships, in this court, but the sentence which the law requires you, as judges, to pronounce against men of our calamitous condition.—But we are also persuaded, that as mere men, and out of this seat of rigorous justice, you are susceptible of the tender passions, and too humane not to commiserate the unhappy situation of those whom the law sometimes perhaps—exacts—from you to pronounce upon. No doubt, you distinguish between offenses which arise out of premeditation, and a disposition habituated to vice or im-

morality, and transgressions, which are the unhappy and unforeseen effects of a casual absence of reason, and sudden impulse of passion: we therefore hope you will contribute all you can to an extension of that mercy which the gentlemen of the jury have been pleased to 5 show Mr. Merchant, who (allowing facts as sworn against us by the evidence) has led us into this our calamity. I hope this will not be construed as if we meant to reflect upon that gentleman, or remove any thing from us upon him, or that we repine the more 10 at our fate, because he has no participation of it. No, my lord! For my part I declare nothing could more soften my grief, than to be without any companion in so great a misfortune.’<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Savage had now no hopes of life, but from the 15 mercy of the crown, which was very earnestly solicited by his friends, and which, with whatever difficulty the story may obtain belief, was obstructed only by his mother.

To prejudice the queen against him, she made use 20 of an incident, which was omitted in the order of time, that it might be mentioned together with the purpose which it was made to serve. Mr. Savage, when he had discovered his birth, had an incessant desire to speak to his mother, who always avoided him in public, and 25 refused him admission into her house. One evening walking, as it was his custom, in the street that she inhabited, he saw the door of her house by accident open; he entered it, and, finding no person in the passage to hinder him, went up stairs to salute her. She 30 discovered him before he could enter her chamber, alarmed the family with the most distressful outcries, and, when she had by her screams gathered them about her, ordered them to drive out of the house that villain, who had forced himself in upon her, and endeavored 35 to murder her. Savage, who had attempted with the

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Savage's *Life*.

most submissive tenderness to soften her rage, hearing her utter so detestable an accusation, thought it prudent to retire; and, I believe, never attempted afterwards to speak to her.

5 But, shocked as he was with her falsehood and her cruelty, he imagined that she intended no other use of her lie, than to set herself free from his embraces and solicitations, and was very far from suspecting that she would treasure it in her memory as an instrument  
10 of future wickedness, or that she would endeavor for this fictitious assault to deprive him of his life.

But when the queen was solicited for his pardon, and informed of the severe treatment which he had suffered from his judge, she answered, that, however unjustifiable  
15 might be the manner of his trial, or whatever extenuation the action for which he was condemned might admit, she could not think that man a proper object of the king's mercy, who had been capable of entering his mother's house in the night with an intent to murder  
20 her.

By whom this atrocious calumny had been transmitted to the queen; whether she that invented had the front to relate it; whether she found any one weak enough to credit it, or corrupt enough to concur with her in  
25 her hateful design, I know not: but methods had been taken to persuade the queen so strongly of the truth of it, that she for a long time refused to hear any of those who petitioned for his life.

Thus had Savage perished by the evidence of a bawd,  
30 a strumpet, and his mother, had not justice and compassion procured him an advocate of rank too great to be rejected unheard, and of virtue too eminent to be heard without being believed. His merit and his calamities happened to reach the ear of the Countess  
35 of Hertford, who engaged in his support with all the tenderness that is excited by pity, and all the zeal which is kindled by generosity; and, demanding an



audience of the queen, laid before her the whole series of his mother's cruelty, exposed the improbability of an accusation by which he was charged with an intent to commit a murder that could produce no advantage, and soon convinced her how little his former conduct 5 could deserve to be mentioned as a reason for extraordinary severity.

The interposition of this lady was so successful, that he was soon after admitted to bail, and on the 9th of March, 1728, pleaded the king's pardon. 10

It is natural to inquire upon what motives his mother could persecute him in a manner so outrageous and implacable; for what reason she could employ all the arts of malice, and all the snares of calumny, to take away the life of her own son, of a son who never in- 15 jured her, who was never supported by her expense, nor obstructed any prospect of pleasure or advantage: why she should endeavor to destroy him by a lie—a lie which could not gain credit, but must vanish of itself at the first moment of examination, and of which 20 only this can be said to make it probable, that it may be observed from her conduct, that the most execrable crimes are sometimes committed without apparent temptation.

This mother is still alive, and may perhaps even yet, 25 though her malice was so often defeated, enjoy the pleasure of reflecting, that the life, which she often endeavored to destroy, was at least shortened by her maternal offices; that though she could not transport her son to the plantations, bury him in the shop of 30 a mechanic, or hasten the hand of the public executioner, she has yet had the satisfaction of embittering all his hours, and forcing him into exigencies that hurried on his death.

It is by no means necessary to aggravate the enormity 35 of this woman's conduct, by placing it in opposition to that of the Countess of Hertford; no one can fail to

observe how much more amiable it is to relieve, than to oppress, and to rescue innocence from destruction, than to destroy without an injury.

Mr. Savage, during his imprisonment, his trial, and the time in which he lay under sentence of death, behaved with great firmness and equality of mind, and confirmed by his fortitude the esteem of those who before admired him for his abilities. The peculiar circumstances of his life were made more generally known by a short account,<sup>1</sup> which was then published, and of which several thousands were in a few weeks dispersed over the nation; and the compassion of mankind operated so powerfully in his favor, that he was enabled, by frequent presents, not only to support himself, but to assist Mr. Gregory in prison; and, when he was pardoned and released, he found the number of his friends not lessened.

The nature of the act for which he had been tried was in itself doubtful; of the evidences which appeared against him, the character of the man was not unexceptionable, that of the woman notoriously infamous; she, whose testimony chiefly influenced the jury to condemn him, afterwards retracted her assertions. He always himself denied that he was drunk, as had been generally reported. Mr. Gregory, who is now (1744) collector of Antigua, is said to declare him far less criminal than he was imagined, even by some who favored him; and Page himself afterwards confessed, that he had treated him with uncommon rigor. When all these particulars are rated together, perhaps the memory of Savage may not be much sullied by his trial.

Some time after he had obtained his liberty, he met in the street the woman that had sworn with so much malignity against him. She informed him that she was in distress, and, with a degree of confidence not easily attainable, desired him to relieve her. He, instead of

<sup>1</sup> Written by Mr. Beckingham and another gentleman.

insulting her misery, and taking pleasure in the calamities of one who had brought his life into danger, reproved her gently for her perjury; and changing the only guinea that he had, divided it equally between her and himself.

5

This is an action which in some ages would have made a saint, and perhaps in others a hero, and which, without any hyperbolical encomiums, must be allowed to be an instance of uncommon generosity, an act of complicated virtue; by which he at once relieved the 10 poor, corrected the vicious, and forgave an enemy; by which he at once remitted the strongest provocations, and exercised the most ardent charity.

Compassion was indeed the distinguishing quality of Savage; he never appeared inclined to take advantage 15 of weakness, to attack the defenseless, or to press upon the falling: whoever was distressed was certain at least of his good wishes; and when he could give no assistance to extricate them from misfortunes, he endeavored to soothe them by sympathy and tenderness.

20

But when his heart was not softened by the sight of misery, he was sometimes obstinate in his resentment, and did not quickly lose the remembrance of an injury. He always continued to speak with anger of the insolence and partiality of Page, and a short time before 25 his death revenged it by a satire.<sup>1</sup>

It is natural to inquire in what terms Mr. Savage spoke of this fatal action, when the danger was over, and he was under no necessity of using any art to set his conduct in the fairest light. He was not willing 30 to dwell upon it; and, if he transiently mentioned it, appeared neither to consider himself as a murderer, nor as a man wholly free from the guilt of blood.<sup>2</sup> How much and how long he regretted it, appeared in a poem which he published many years afterwards. On 35

<sup>1</sup>Printed in the late Collection.

<sup>2</sup>In one of his letters he styled it 'a fatal quarrel, but too well known.'

occasion of a copy of verses, in which the failings of good men were recounted, and in which the author had endeavored to illustrate his position, that 'the best may sometimes deviate from virtue,' by an instance of murder committed by Savage in the heat of wine, Savage remarked, that it was no very just representation of a good man, to suppose him liable to drunkenness, and disposed in his riots to cut throats.

10 He was now indeed at liberty, but was, as before, without any other support than accidental favors and uncertain patronage afforded him; sources by which he was sometimes very liberally supplied, and which at other times were suddenly stopped; so that he spent his  
15 life between want and plenty; or, what was yet worse, between beggary and extravagance; for as whatever he received was the gift of chance, which might as well favor him at one time as another, he was tempted to squander what he had, because he always hoped to be  
20 immediately supplied.

Another cause of his profusion was the absurd kindness of his friends, who at once rewarded and enjoyed his abilities, by treating him at taverns, and habituating him to pleasures which he could not afford to enjoy,  
25 and which he was not able to deny himself, though he purchased the luxury of a single night by the anguish of cold and hunger for a week.

The experience of these inconveniences determined him to endeavor after some settled income, which, having  
30 long found submission and entreaties fruitless, he attempted to extort from his mother by rougher methods. He had now, as he acknowledged, lost that tenderness for her, which the whole series of her cruelty had not been able wholly to repress, till he found, by the efforts  
35 which she made for his destruction, that she was not content with refusing to assist him, and being neutral in his struggles with poverty, but was as ready to snatch

every opportunity of adding to his misfortunes; and that she was to be considered as an enemy implacably malicious, whom nothing but his blood could satisfy. He therefore threatened to harass her with lampoons, and to publish a copious narrative of her conduct, unless she consented to purchase an exemption from infamy by allowing him a pension.

This expedient proved successful. Whether shame still survived, though virtue was extinct, or whether her relations had more delicacy than herself, and imagined that some of the darts which satire might point at her would glance upon them; Lord Tyrconnel, whatever were his motives, upon his promise to lay aside his design of exposing the cruelty of his mother, received him into his family, treated him as his equal, and engaged to allow him a pension of two hundred pounds a year.

This was the golden part of Mr. Savage's life; and for some time he had no reason to complain of fortune; his appearance was splendid, his expenses large, and his acquaintance extensive. He was courted by all who endeavored to be thought men of genius, and caressed by all who valued themselves upon a refined taste. To admire Mr. Savage was a proof of discernment; and to be acquainted with him was a title of poetical reputation. His presence was sufficient to make any place of public entertainment popular; and his approbation and example constituted the fashion. So powerful is genius, when it is invested with the glitter of affluence! Men willingly pay to fortune that regard which they owe to merit, and are pleased when they have an opportunity at once of gratifying their vanity, and practising their duty.

This interval of prosperity furnished him with opportunities of enlarging his knowledge of human nature, by contemplating life from its highest gradations to its lowest; and, had he afterwards applied to dramatic

poetry, he would perhaps not have had many superiors; for, as he never suffered any scene to pass before his eyes without notice, he had treasured in his mind all the different combinations of passions, and the innumera-  
5 ble mixtures of vice and virtue, which distinguish one character from another; and, as his conception was strong, his expressions were clear, he easily received impressions from objects, and very forcibly transmitted them to others.

10 Of his exact observations on human life he has left a proof, which would do honor to the greatest names, in a small pamphlet, called *The Author to be let*,<sup>1</sup> where he introduces Iscariot Hackney, a prostitute scribbler, giving an account of his birth, his education, his dis-  
15 position and morals, habits of life, and maxims of conduct. In the introduction are related many secret histories of the petty writers of that time, but sometimes mixed with ungenerous reflections on their birth, their circumstances, or those of their relations; nor can it  
20 be denied, that some passages are such as Iscariot Hackney might himself have produced.

He was accused likewise of living in an appearance of friendship with some whom he satirised, and of making use of the confidence which he gained by a seeming  
25 kindness, to discover failings and expose them: it must be confessed, that Mr. Savage's esteem was no very certain possession, and that he would lampoon at one time those whom he had praised at another.

It may be alleged that the same man may change his  
30 principles; and that he who was once deservedly commended may be afterwards satirised with equal justice; or that the poet was dazzled with the appearance of virtue, and found the man whom he had celebrated, when he had an opportunity of examining him more  
35 narrowly, unworthy of the panegyric which he had too hastily bestowed; and that as a false satire ought to be

<sup>1</sup> Printed in his Works, vol. ii, p. 231.

recanted, for the sake of him whose reputation may be injured, false praise ought likewise to be obviated, lest the distinction between vice and virtue should be lost, lest a bad man should be trusted upon the credit of his encomiast, or lest others should endeavor to obtain the like praises by the same means.

But though these excuses may be often plausible, and sometimes just, they are very seldom satisfactory to mankind; and the writer who is not constant to his subject, quickly sinks into contempt, his satire loses its force, and his panegyric its value; and he is only considered at one time as a flatterer, and as a calumniator at another.

To avoid these imputations, it is only necessary to follow the rules of virtue, and to preserve an unvaried regard to truth. For though it is undoubtedly possible that a man, however cautious, may be sometimes deceived by an artful appearance of virtue, or by false evidences of guilt, such errors will not be frequent; and it will be allowed, that the name of an author would never have been made contemptible, had no man ever said what he did not think, or misled others but when he was himself deceived.

*The Author to be let* was first published in a single pamphlet, and afterwards inserted in a collection of pieces relating to *The Dunciad*, which were addressed by Mr. Savage to the Earl of Middlesex, in a dedication<sup>1</sup> which he was prevailed upon to sign, though he did not write it, and in which there are some positions that the true author would perhaps not have published under his own name, and on which Mr. Savage afterwards reflected with no great satisfaction: the enumeration of the bad effects of 'the uncontrolled freedom of the press,' and the assertion that the 'liberties taken by the writers of journals with their superiors were exorbitant and unjustifiable,' very ill became men, who have themselves

<sup>1</sup> See his Works, vol. II, p. 233.

not always shown the exactest regard to the laws of subordination in their writings, and who have often satirised those that at least thought themselves their superiors, as they were eminent for their hereditary rank, and employed in the highest offices of the kingdom. But this is only an instance of that partiality which almost every man indulges with regard to himself: the liberty of the press is a blessing when we are inclined to write against others, and a calamity when we find ourselves overborne by the multitude of our assailants; as the power of the crown is always thought too great by those who suffer by its influence, and too little by those in whose favor it is exerted; and a standing army is generally accounted necessary by those who command, and dangerous and oppressive by those who support it.

Mr. Savage was likewise very far from believing that the letters annexed to each species of bad poets in *The Bathos* were, as he was directed to assert, 'set down at random'; for when he was charged by one of his friends with putting his name to such an improbability, he had no other answer to make than that 'he did not think of it'; and his friend had too much tenderness to reply, that next to the crime of writing contrary to what he thought, was that of writing without thinking.

After having remarked what is false in his dedication, it is proper that I observe the impartiality which I recommend, by declaring what Savage asserted; that the account of the circumstances which attended the publication of *The Dunciad*, however strange and improbable, was exactly true.

The publication of this piece at this time raised Mr. Savage a great number of enemies among those that were attacked by Mr. Pope, with whom he was considered as a kind of confederate, and whom he was suspected of supplying with private intelligence and



secret incidents: so that the ignominy of an informer was added to the terror of a satirist.

That he was not altogether free from literary hypocrisy, and that he sometimes spoke one thing and wrote another, cannot be denied; because he himself confessed, that, when he lived in great familiarity with Dennis, he wrote an epigram<sup>1</sup> against him.

Mr. Savage, however, set all the malice of all the pigmy writers at defiance, and thought the friendship 10 of Mr. Pope cheaply purchased by being exposed to their censure and their hatred; nor had he any reason to repent of the preference, for he found Mr. Pope a steady and unalienable friend almost to the end of his life.

15

About this time, notwithstanding his avowed neutrality with regard to party, he published a panegyric on Sir Robert Walpole, for which he was rewarded by him with twenty guineas, a sum not very large, if either the excellence of the performance, or the affluence 20 of the patron, be considered: but greater than he afterwards obtained from a person of yet higher rank, and more desirous in appearance of being distinguished as a patron of literature.

As he was very far from approving the conduct 25 of Sir Robert Walpole, and in conversation mentioned him sometimes with acrimony, and generally with contempt; as he was one of those who were always zealous in their assertions of the justice of the late opposition, jealous of the rights of the people, and alarmed by 30 the long-continued triumph of the court; it was natural

<sup>1</sup> This epigram was, I believe, never published.

Should Dennis publish you had stabb'd your brother,  
Lampoon'd your monarch, or debauch'd your mother;  
Say, what revenge on Dennis can be had,  
Too dull for laughter, for reply too mad?  
On one so poor you cannot take the law,  
On one so old your sword you scorn to draw,  
Uncag'd then, let the harmless monster rage,  
Secure in dullness, madness, want, and age.

to ask him what could induce him to employ his poetry in praise of that man, who was, in his opinion, an enemy to liberty, and an oppressor of his country? He alleged, that he was then dependant upon the lord  
 5 Tyrconnel, who was an implicit follower of the ministry, and that, being enjoined by him, not without menaces, to write in praise of his leader, he had not resolution sufficient to sacrifice the pleasure of affluence to that of integrity.

10 On this, and on many other occasions, he was ready to lament the misery of living at the tables of other men, which was his fate from the beginning to the end of his life; for I know not whether he ever had, for three months together, a settled  
 15 habitation, in which he could claim a right of residence.

To this unhappy state it is just to impute much of the inconstancy of his conduct; for though a readiness to comply with the inclination of others was no part  
 20 of his natural character, yet he was sometimes obliged to relax his obstinacy, and submit his own judgment, and even his virtue, to the government of those by whom he was supported: so that, if his miseries were sometimes the consequences of his faults, he ought not  
 25 yet to be wholly excluded from compassion, because his faults were very often the effects of his misfortunes.

In this gay period<sup>1</sup> of his life, while he was surrounded by affluence and pleasure, he published *The*  
 30 *Wanderer*, a moral poem, of which the design is comprised in these lines:

I fly all public care, all venal strife,  
 To try the still, compar'd with active life;  
 To prove, by these, the sons of men may owe  
 The fruits of bliss to bursting clouds of woe;  
 That ev'n calamity, by thought refin'd,  
 Inspirits and adorns the thinking mind.

35

And more distinctly in the following passage:

By woe, the soul to daring action swells;  
By woe, in plaintless patience it excels:  
From patience, prudent clear experience springs,  
And traces knowledge through the course of things! 5  
Thence hope is form'd, thence fortitude, success,  
Renown—whate'er men covet and caress.

This performance was always considered by himself as his masterpiece; and Mr. Pope, when he asked his opinion of it, told him, that he read it once over, and 10 was not displeased with it; that it gave him more pleasure at the second perusal, and delighted him still more at the third.

It has been generally objected to *The Wanderer*, that the disposition of the parts is irregular; that the design 15 is obscure and the plan perplexed; that the images, however beautiful, succeed each other without order; and that the whole performance is not so much a regular fabric, as a heap of shining materials thrown together by accident, which strikes rather with the solemn 20 magnificence of a stupendous ruin, than the elegant grandeur of a finished pile.

This criticism is universal, and therefore it is reasonable to believe it at least in a great degree just; but Mr. Savage was always of a contrary opinion, and thought 25 his drift could only be missed by negligence or stupidity, and that the whole plan was regular, and the parts distinct.

It was never denied to abound with strong representations of nature, and just observations upon life; and 30 it may easily be observed, that most of his pictures have an evident tendency to illustrate his first great position, 'that good is the consequence of evil.' The sun that burns up the mountains, fructifies the vales; the deluge that rushes down the broken rocks with 35 dreadful impetuosity is separated into purling brooks; and the rage of the hurricane purifies the air.

Even in this poem he has not been able to forbear

one touch upon the cruelty of his mother, which, though remarkably delicate and tender, is a proof how deep an impression it had upon his mind.

This must be at least acknowledged, which ought to be thought equivalent to many other excellencies, that this poem can promote no other purposes than those of virtue, and that it is written with a very strong sense of the efficacy of religion.

But my province is rather to give the history of Mr. Savage's performances than to display their beauties, or to obviate the criticisms which they have occasioned; and therefore I shall not dwell upon the particular passages which deserve applause; I shall neither show the excellence of his descriptions, nor expatiate on the terrific portrait of suicide, nor point out the artful touches by which he has distinguished the intellectual features of the rebels who suffered death in his last canto. It is, however, proper to observe, that Mr. Savage always declared the characters wholly fictitious, and without the least allusion to any real persons or actions.

From a poem so diligently labored, and so successfully finished, it might be reasonably expected that he should have gained considerable advantage; nor can it, without some degree of indignation and concern, be told, that he sold the copy for ten guineas, of which he afterwards returned two, that the two last sheets of the work might be reprinted, of which he had in his absence intrusted the correction to a friend, who was too indolent to perform it with accuracy.

A superstitious regard to the correction of his sheets was one of Mr. Savage's peculiarities: he often altered, revised, recurred to his first reading or punctuation, and again adopted the alteration; he was dubious and irresolute without end, as on a question of the last importance, and at last was seldom satisfied: the intrusion or omission of a comma was sufficient to discompose

him, and he would lament an error of a single letter as a heavy calamity. In one of his letters relating to an impression of some verses, he remarks that he had, with regard to the correction of the proof, 'a spell upon him'; and indeed the anxiety with which he dwelt 5 upon the minutest and most trifling niceties deserved no other name than that of fascination.

That he sold so valuable a performance for so small a price; was not to be imputed either to necessity, by which the learned and ingenious are often obliged to 10 submit to very hard conditions; or to avarice, by which the booksellers are frequently incited to oppress that genius by which they are supported; but to that intemperate desire of pleasure, and habitual slavery to his passions, which involved him in many perplexities. 15 He happened at that time to be engaged in the pursuit of some trifling gratification, and, being without money for the present occasion, sold his poem to the first bidder, and perhaps for the first price that was proposed, and would probably have been content with less, if less 20 had been offered him.

This poem was addressed to the Lord Tyrconnel, not only in the first lines, but in a formal dedication filled with the highest strains of panegyric, and the warmest professions of gratitude, but by no means remarkable 25 for delicacy of connection or elegance of style.

These praises in a short time he found himself inclined to retract, being discarded by the man on whom he had bestowed them, and whom he then immediately discovered not to have deserved them. Of this quarrel, 30 which every day made more bitter, Lord Tyrconnel and Mr. Savage assigned very different reasons, which might perhaps all in reality concur, though they were not all convenient to be alleged by either party. Lord Tyrconnel affirmed, that it was the constant practice of 35 Mr. Savage to enter a tavern with any company that proposed it, drink the most expensive wines with great

profusion, and when the reckoning was demanded, to be without money. If, as it often happened, his company were willing to defray his part, the affair ended without any ill consequences; but if they were refractory, and expected that the wine should be paid for by him that drank it, his method of composition was, to take them with him to his own apartment, assume the government of the house, and order the butler in an imperious manner to set the best wine in the cellar before his company, who often drank till they forgot the respect due to the house in which they were entertained, indulged themselves in the utmost extravagance of merriment, practised the most licentious frolics, and committed all the outrages of drunkenness.

15 Nor was this the only charge which Lord Tyrconnel brought against him; having given him a collection of valuable books, stamped with his own arms, he had the mortification to see them in a short time exposed to sale upon the stalls, it being usual with Mr. Savage, 20 when he wanted a small sum, to take his books to the pawnbroker.

Whoever was acquainted with Mr. Savage easily credited both these accusations: for having been obliged, from his first entrance into the world, to subsist upon 25 expedients, affluence was not able to exalt him above them; and so much was he delighted with wine and conversation, and so long had he been accustomed to live by chance, that he would at any time go to the tavern without scruple, and trust for the reckoning 30 to the liberality of his company, and frequently of company to whom he was very little known. This conduct indeed very seldom drew upon him those inconveniences that might be feared by any other person; for his conversation was so entertaining, and his address so pleasing, that few thought the pleasure which they received from him dearly purchased, by paying for his wine. It was his peculiar happiness, that he scarcely

ever found a stranger, whom he did not leave a friend; but it must likewise be added, that he had not often a friend long, without obliging him to become a stranger.

Mr. Savage, on the other hand, declared that Lord Tyrconnel<sup>1</sup> quarreled with him, because he would 5 subtract from his own luxury and extravagance what he had promised to allow him, and that his resentment was only a plea for the violation of his promise. He asserted, that he had done nothing that ought to exclude him from that subsistence which he thought not 10 so much a favor, as a debt, since it was offered him upon conditions which he had never broken; and that his only fault was, that he could not be supported with nothing.

He acknowledged that Lord Tyrconnel often exhorted 15 him to regulate his method of life, and not to spend all his nights in taverns, and that he appeared very desirous that he would pass those hours with him, which he so freely bestowed upon others. This demand Mr. Savage considered as a censure of his conduct, which he could 20 never patiently bear, and which, in the latter and cooler part of his life, was so offensive to him, that he declared it as his resolution, 'to spurn that friend who should presume to dictate to him'; and it is not likely, that in his earlier years he received admonitions with more 25 calmness.

He was likewise inclined to resent such expectations, as tending to infringe his liberty, of which he was very jealous, when it was very necessary to the gratification of his passions; and declared that the request was still 30 more unreasonable, as the company to which he was to have been confined, was insupportably disagreeable. This assertion affords another instance of that inconsistency of his writings with his conversation, which was so often to be observed. He forgot how lavishly 35

<sup>1</sup> His expression in one of his letters was, 'that Lord Tyrconnel had involved his estate, and therefore poorly sought an occasion to quarrel with him.'

- he had, in his Dedication to *The Wanderer*, extolled the delicacy and penetration, the humanity and generosity, the candor and politeness of the man, whom, when he no longer loved him, he declared to be a wretch  
5 without understanding, without good-nature, and without justice; of whose name he thought himself obliged to leave no trace in any future edition of his writings; and accordingly blotted it out of that copy of *The Wanderer* which was in his hands.
- 10 During his continuance with the lord Tyrconnel, he wrote *The Triumph of Health and Mirth*, on the recovery of Lady Tyrconnel from a languishing illness. This performance is remarkable, not only for the gaiety of the ideas, and the melody of the numbers, but for  
15 the agreeable fiction upon which it is formed. Mirth, overwhelmed with sorrow for the sickness of her favorite, takes a flight in quest of her sister Health, whom she finds reclined upon the brow of a lofty mountain, amidst the fragrance of perpetual spring, with the breezes of  
20 the morning sporting about her. Being solicited by her sister Mirth, she readily promises her assistance, flies away in a cloud, and impregnates the waters of Bath with new virtues, by which the sickness of Belinda is relieved.
- 25 As the reputation of his abilities, the particular circumstances of his birth and life, the splendor of his appearance, and the distinction which was for some time paid him by Lord Tyrconnel, entitled him to familiarity with persons of higher rank than those to  
30 whose conversation he had been before admitted; he did not fail to gratify that curiosity, which induced him to take a nearer view of those whom their birth, their employments, or their fortunes, necessarily place at a distance from the greatest part of mankind, and to  
35 examine whether their merit was magnified or diminished by the medium through which it was contemplated; whether the splendor with which they dazzled their



admirers was inherent in themselves, or only reflected on them by the objects that surrounded them; and whether great men were selected for high stations, or high stations made great men.

For this purpose he took all opportunities of conversing familiarly with those who were most conspicuous at that time for their power or their influence; he watched their looser moments, and examined their domestic behavior with that acuteness which nature had given him, and which the uncommon variety of his life 10 had contributed to increase, and that inquisitiveness which must always be produced in a vigorous mind, by an absolute freedom from all pressing or domestic engagements. His discernment was quick, and therefore he soon found in every person, and in every affair, 15 something that deserved attention; he was supported by others, without any care for himself, and was therefore at leisure to pursue his observations.

More circumstances to constitute a critic on human life could not easily concur; nor indeed could any man, 20 who assumed from accidental advantages more praise than he could justly claim from his real merit, admit an acquaintance more dangerous than that of Savage; of whom likewise it must be confessed, that abilities really exalted above the common level, or virtue refined 25 from passion, or proof against corruption, could not easily find an abler judge, or a warmer advocate.

What was the result of Mr. Savage's inquiry, though he was not much accustomed to conceal his discoveries, it may not be entirely safe to relate, because the persons whose characters he criticised are powerful; and power and resentment are seldom strangers; nor would it perhaps be wholly just, because what he asserted in conversation might, though true in general, be heightened by some momentary ardor of imagination, and, 35 as it can be delivered only from memory, may be imperfectly represented; so that the picture at first ag-

gravated, and then unskillfully copied, may be justly suspected to retain no great resemblance of the original.

It may, however, be observed, that he did not appear to have formed very elevated ideas of those to whom  
5 the administration of affairs, or the conduct of parties, has been intrusted; who have been considered as the advocates of the crown, or the guardians of the people; and who have obtained the most implicit confidence, and the loudest applauses. Of one particular person, who  
10 has been at one time so popular as to be generally esteemed, and at another so formidable as to be universally detested, he observed, that his acquisitions had been small, or that his capacity was narrow, and that the whole range of his mind was from obscenity to  
15 politics, and from politics to obscenity.

But the opportunity of indulging his speculations on great characters was now at an end. He was banished from the table of Lord Tyrconnel, and turned again adrift upon the world, without prospect of finding  
20 quickly any other harbor. As prudence was not one of the virtues by which he was distinguished, he had made no provision against a misfortune like this. And though it is not to be imagined but that the separation must for some time have been preceded by coldness,  
25 peevishness, or neglect, though it was undoubtedly the consequence of accumulated provocations on both sides; yet every one that knew Savage will readily believe, that to him it was sudden as a stroke of thunder; that, though he might have transiently suspected it, he had  
30 never suffered any thought so unpleasing to sink into his mind, but that he had driven it away by amusements, or dreams of future felicity and affluence, and had never taken any measures by which he might prevent a precipitation from plenty to indigence.

35 This quarrel and separation, and the difficulties to which Mr. Savage was exposed by them, were soon known both to his friends and enemies; nor was it

long before he perceived, from the behavior of both, how much is added to the lustre of genius by the ornaments of wealth.

His condition did not appear to excite much compassion; for he had not always been careful to use the advantages he enjoyed with that moderation which ought to have been with more than usual caution preserved by him, who knew, if he had reflected, that he was only a dependent on the bounty of another, whom he could expect to support him no longer than he endeavored to preserve his favor by complying with his inclinations, and whom he nevertheless set at defiance, and was continually irritating by negligence or encroachments.

Examples need not be sought at any great distance to prove, that superiority of fortune has a natural tendency to kindle pride, and that pride seldom fails to exert itself in contempt and insult; and if this is often the effect of hereditary wealth, and of honors enjoyed only by the merit of others, it is some extenuation of any indecent triumphs to which this unhappy man may have been betrayed, that his prosperity was heightened by the force of novelty, and made more intoxicating by a sense of the misery in which he had so long languished, and perhaps of the insults which he had formerly borne, and which he might now think himself entitled to revenge. It is too common for those who have unjustly suffered pain, to inflict it likewise in their turn with the same injustice, and to imagine that they have a right to treat others as they have themselves been treated.

That Mr. Savage was too much elevated by any good fortune, is generally known; and some passages of his Introduction to *The Author to be let* sufficiently show, that he did not wholly refrain from such satire as he afterwards thought very unjust when he was exposed to it himself; for, when he was afterwards ridi-

culed in the character of a distressed poet, he very easily discovered that distress was not a proper subject for merriment, or topic of invective. He was then able to discern, that if misery be the effect of virtue, it 5 ought to be revered; if of ill-fortune, to be pitied; and if of vice, not to be insulted, because it is perhaps itself a punishment adequate to the crime by which it was produced. And the humanity of that man can deserve no panegyric, who is capable of reproaching 10 a criminal in the hands of the executioner.

But these reflections, though they readily occurred to him in the first and last parts of his life, were, I am afraid, for a long time forgotten; at least they were, like many other maxims, treasured up in his mind rather 15 for show than use, and operated very little upon his conduct, however elegantly he might sometimes explain, or however forcibly he might inculcate them.

His degradation, therefore, from the condition which he had enjoyed with such wanton thoughtlessness, was 20 considered by many as an occasion of triumph. Those who had before paid their court to him without success, soon returned the contempt which they had suffered; and they who had received favors from him, for of such favors as he could bestow he was very liberal, 25 did not always remember them. So much more certain are the effects of resentment than of gratitude: it is not only to many more pleasing to recollect those faults which place others below them, than those virtues by which they are themselves comparatively depressed; but 30 it is likewise more easy to neglect, than to recompense; and though there are few who will practise a laborious virtue, there will never be wanting multitudes that will indulge an easy vice.

Savage, however, was very little disturbed at the 35 marks of contempt which his ill-fortune brought upon him from those whom he never esteemed, and with whom he never considered himself as levelled by any

calamities: and though it was not without some uneasiness that he saw some, whose friendship he valued, change their behavior; he yet observed their coldness without much emotion, considered them as the slaves of fortune and the worshippers of prosperity, and was 5 more inclined to despise them, than to lament himself.

It does not appear that, after this return of his wants, he found mankind equally favorable to him, as at his first appearance in the world. His story, though in reality not less melancholy, was less affecting, 10 because it was no longer new; it therefore procured him no new friends; and those that had formerly relieved him, thought they might now consign him to others. He was now likewise considered by many rather as criminal, than as unhappy; for the friends of Lord 15 Tyreconnel, and of his mother, were sufficiently industrious to publish his weaknesses, which were indeed very numerous; and nothing was forgotten, that might make him either hateful or ridiculous.

It cannot but be imagined that such representations 20 of his faults must make great numbers less sensible of his distress; many, who had only an opportunity to hear one part, made no scruple to propagate the account which they received; many assisted their circulation from malice or revenge; and perhaps many pre- 25 tended to credit them, that they might with a better grace withdraw their regard, or withhold their assistance.

Savage, however, was not one of those who suffered himself to be injured without resistance, nor was less 30 diligent in exposing the faults of Lord Tyreconnel, over whom he obtained at least this advantage, that he drove him first to the practice of outrage and violence; for he was so much provoked by the wit and virulence of Savage, that he came with a number of attendants, that 35 did no honor to his courage, to beat him at a coffee-house. But it happened that he had left the place a

few minutes; and his lordship had, without danger, the pleasure of boasting how he would have treated him. Mr. Savage went next day to repay his visit at his own house; but was prevailed on, by his domestics, 5 to retire without insisting upon seeing him.

Lord Tyrconnel was accused by Mr. Savage of some actions which scarcely any provocations will be thought sufficient to justify; such as seizing what he had in his lodgings, and other instances of wanton cruelty, by 10 which he increased the distress of Savage, without any advantage to himself.

These mutual accusations were retorted on both sides for many years, with the utmost degree of virulence and rage; and time seemed rather to augment than 15 diminish their resentment. That the anger of Mr. Savage should be kept alive, is not strange, because he felt every day the consequences of the quarrel; but it might reasonably have been hoped, that Lord Tyrconnel might have relented, and at length have forgot those 20 provocations, which, however they might have once inflamed him, had not in reality much hurt him.

The spirit of Mr. Savage indeed never suffered him to solicit a reconciliation; he returned reproach for reproach, and insult for insult; his superiority of wit 25 supplied the disadvantages of his fortune, and enabled him to form a party, and prejudice great numbers in his favor.

But though this might be some gratification of his vanity, it afforded very little relief to his necessities; 30 and he was very frequently reduced to uncommon hardships, of which, however, he never made any mean or importunate complaints, being formed rather to bear misery with fortitude, than enjoy prosperity with moderation.

35 He now thought himself again at liberty to expose the cruelty of his mother; and therefore, I believe, about this time, published *The Bastard*, a poem remarkable

for the vivacious sallies of thought in the beginning, where he makes a pompous enumeration of the imaginary advantages of base birth; and the pathetic sentiments at the end, where he recounts the real calamities which he suffered by the crime of his parents. 5

The vigor and spirit of the verses, the peculiar circumstances of the author, the novelty of the subject, and the notoriety of the story to which the allusions are made, procured this performance a very favorable reception; great numbers were immediately dispersed, 10 and editions were multiplied with unusual rapidity.

One circumstance attended the publication which Savage used to relate with great satisfaction. His mother, to whom the poem was 'with due reverence' inscribed, happened then to be at Bath, where she could not 15 conveniently retire from censure, or conceal herself from observation; and no sooner did the reputation of the poem begin to spread, than she heard it repeated in all places of concourse; nor could she enter the assembly-rooms, or cross the walks, without being saluted with 20 some lines from *The Bastard*.

This was perhaps the first time that ever she discovered a sense of shame, and on this occasion the power of wit was very conspicuous; the wretch who had, without scruple, proclaimed herself an adulteress, 25 and who had first endeavored to starve her son, then to transport him, and afterwards to hang him, was not able to bear the representation of her own conduct; but fled from reproach, though she felt no pain from guilt, and left Bath with the utmost haste, to shelter 30 herself among the crowds of London.

Thus Savage had the satisfaction of finding, that, though he could not reform his mother, he could punish her, and that he did not always suffer alone.

The pleasure which he received from this increase of 35 his poetical reputation, was sufficient for some time to overbalance the miseries of want, which this perform-

ance did not much alleviate; for it was sold for a very trivial sum to a bookseller, who, though the success was so uncommon that five impressions were sold, of which many were undoubtedly very numerous, had not generosity sufficient to admit the unhappy writer to any part of the profit.

The sale of this poem was always mentioned by Savage with the utmost elevation of heart, and referred to by him as an incontestable proof of a general acknowledgment of his abilities. It was indeed the only production of which he could justly boast a general reception.

But though he did not lose the opportunity which success gave him, of setting a high rate on his abilities, but paid due deference to the suffrages of mankind when they were given in his favor, he did not suffer his esteem of himself to depend upon others, nor found any thing sacred in the voice of the people when they were inclined to censure him; he then readily showed the folly of expecting that the public should judge right, observed how slowly poetical merit had often forced its way into the world; he contented himself with the applause of men of judgment, and was somewhat disposed to exclude all those from the character of men of judgment who did not applaud him.

But he was at other times more favorable to mankind than to think them blind to the beauties of his works, and imputed the slowness of their sale to other causes; either they were published at a time when the town was empty, or when the attention of the public was engrossed by some struggle in the Parliament, or some other object of general concern; or they were by the neglect of the publisher not diligently dispersed, or by his avarice not advertised with sufficient frequency. Address, or industry, or liberality, was always wanting; and the blame was laid rather on any person than the author.



By arts like these, arts which every man practises in some degree, and to which too much of the little tranquillity of life is to be ascribed, Savage was always able to live at peace with himself. Had he indeed only made use of these expedients to alleviate the loss or want of fortune or reputation, or any other advantages which it is not in man's power to bestow upon himself, they might have been justly mentioned as instances of a philosophical mind, and very properly proposed to the imitation of multitudes, who, for want of diverting their imaginations with the same dexterity, languish under afflictions which might be easily removed.

It were doubtless to be wished that truth and reason were universally prevalent; that every thing were esteemed according to its real value; and that men would secure themselves from being disappointed in their endeavors after happiness, by placing it only in virtue, which is always to be obtained; but, if adventitious and foreign pleasures must be pursued, it would be perhaps of some benefit, since that pursuit must frequently be fruitless, if the practice of Savage could be taught, that folly might be an antidote to folly, and one fallacy be obviated by another.

But the danger of this pleasing intoxication must not be concealed; nor indeed can any one, after having observed the life of Savage, need to be cautioned against it. By imputing none of his miseries to himself, he continued to act upon the same principles, and to follow the same path; was never made wiser by his sufferings, nor preserved by one misfortune from falling into another. He proceeded throughout his life to tread the same steps on the same circle; always applauding his past conduct, or at least forgetting it to amuse himself with phantoms of happiness, which were dancing before him; and willingly turned his eyes from the light of reason, when it would have discovered the illusion, and shown him, what he never wished to see, his real state.

He is even accused, after having lulled his imagination with those ideal opiates, of having tried the same experiment upon his conscience; and, having accustomed himself to impute all deviations from the right to foreign causes, it is certain that he was upon every occasion too easily reconciled to himself, and that he appeared very little to regret those practices which had impaired his reputation. The reigning error of his life was, that he mistook the love for the practice of virtue, and was indeed not so much a good man as the friend of goodness.

This at least must be allowed him, that he always preserved a strong sense of the dignity, the beauty, and the necessity of virtue; and that he never contributed deliberately to spread corruption amongst mankind. His actions, which were generally precipitate, were often blameable; but his writings, being the productions of study, uniformly tended to the exaltation of the mind, and the propagation of morality and piety.

These writings may improve mankind, when his failings shall be forgotten; and therefore he must be considered, upon the whole, as a benefactor to the world; nor can his personal example do any hurt, since whoever hears of his faults will hear of the miseries which they brought upon him, and which would deserve less pity, had not his condition been such as made his faults pardonable. He may be considered as a child exposed to all the temptations of indigence, at an age when resolution was not yet strengthened by conviction, nor virtue confirmed by habit; a circumstance which, in his *Bastard*, he laments in a very affecting manner:

—No mother's care  
Shielded my infant innocence with prayer:  
No father's guardian-hand my youth maintain'd,  
Call'd forth my virtues, or from vice restrain'd.

*The Bastard*, however it might provoke or mortify his mother, could not be expected to melt her to com-

passion, so that he was still under the same want of the necessities of life; and he therefore exerted all the interest which his wit, or his birth, or his misfortunes, could procure, to obtain, upon the death of Eusden, the place of Poet Laureate, and prosecuted his application with so much diligence, that the King publicly declared it his intention to bestow it upon him; but such was the fate of Savage, that even the King, when he intended his advantage, was disappointed in his schemes; for the Lord Chamberlain, who has the disposal of the laurel, as one of the appendages of his office, either did not know the King's design, or did not approve it, or thought the nomination of the Laureate an encroachment upon his rights, and therefore bestowed the laurel upon Colley Cibber.

15

Mr. Savage, thus disappointed, took a resolution of applying to the Queen, that, having once given him life, she would enable him to support it, and therefore published a short poem on her birthday, to which he gave the odd title of *Volunteer Laureate*. The event of 20 this essay he has himself related in the following letter, which he prefixed to the poem, when he afterwards reprinted it in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, from whence I have copied it entire, as this was one of the few attempts in which Mr. Savage succeeded.

25

‘MR. URBAN:

‘In your Magazine for February you published the last *Volunteer Laureate*, written on a very melancholy occasion, the death of the royal patroness of arts and literature in general, and of the author of that poem in particular; I now send you the first that Mr. Savage wrote under that title.—This gentleman, notwithstanding a very considerable interest, being, on the death of Mr. Eusden, disappointed of the Laureate's place, wrote the before-mentioned poem; which was no sooner published, but the late Queen sent to a bookseller for

it. The author had not at that time a friend either to get him introduced, or his poem presented at Court; yet such was the unspeakable goodness of that Princess, that, notwithstanding this act of ceremony was wanting, 5 in a few days after publication, Mr. Savage received a bank-bill of fifty pounds, and a gracious message from Her Majesty, by the Lord North and Guildford, to this effect: "That Her Majesty was highly pleased with the verses; that she took particularly kind his lines there 10 relating to the King; that he had permission to write annually on the same subject; and that he should yearly receive the like present, till something better (which was Her Majesty's intention) could be done for him." After this, he was permitted to present one of his an- 15 nual poems to Her Majesty, had the honor of kissing her hand, and met with the most gracious reception.

Yours, &c.'

Such was the performance,<sup>1</sup> and such its reception; a reception, which, though by no means unkind, was yet 20 not in the highest degree generous: to chain down the genius of a writer to an annual panegyric, showed in the Queen too much desire of hearing her own praises, and a greater regard to herself than to him on whom her bounty was conferred. It was a kind of avaricious 25 generosity, by which flattery was rather purchased than genius rewarded.

Mrs. Oldfield had formerly given him the same allowance with much more heroic intention: she had no other view than to enable him to prosecute his studies, 30 and to set himself above the want of assistance, and was contented with doing good without stipulating for encomiums.

Mr. Savage, however, was not at liberty to make exceptions, but was ravished with the favors which he 35 had received, and probably yet more with those which

<sup>1</sup> This poem is inserted in the late collection.

he was promised; he considered himself now as a favorite of the Queen, and did not doubt but a few annual poems would establish him in some profitable employment.

He therefore assumed the title of 'Volunteer Laureate,' not without some reprehensions from Cibber, who informed him, that the title of 'Laureate' was a mark of honor conferred by the King, from whom all honor is derived, and which therefore no man has a right to bestow upon himself; and added, that he might with equal propriety style himself a Volunteer Lord or Volunteer Baronet. It cannot be denied that the remark was just; but Savage did not think any title, which was conferred upon Mr. Cibber, so honorable as that the usurpation of it could be imputed to him as an instance of very exorbitant vanity, and therefore continued to write under the same title, and received every year the same reward.

He did not appear to consider these encomiums as tests of his abilities, or as any thing more than annual hints to the Queen of her promise, or acts of ceremony, by the performance of which he was entitled to his pension, and therefore did not labor them with great diligence, or print more than fifty each year, except that for some of the last years he regularly inserted them in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, by which they were dispersed over the kingdom.

Of some of them he had himself so low an opinion, that he intended to omit them in the collection of poems, for which he printed proposals, and solicited subscriptions; nor can it seem strange, that, being confined to the same subject, he should be at some times indolent, and at others unsuccessful; that he should sometimes delay a disagreeable task till it was too late to perform it well; or that he should sometimes repeat the same sentiment on the same occasion, or at others be misled

by an attempt after novelty to forced conceptions and far-fetched images.

He wrote indeed with a double intention, which supplied him with some variety; for his business was, to 5 praise the Queen for the favors which he had received, and to complain to her of the delay of those which she had promised: in some of his pieces, therefore, gratitude is predominant, and in some discontent; in some, he represents himself as happy in her patronage; and, 10 in others, as disconsolate to find himself neglected.

Her promise, like other promises made to this unfortunate man, was never performed, though he took sufficient care that it should not be forgotten. The publication of his *Volunteer Laureate* procured him no 15 other reward than a regular remittance of fifty pounds.

He was not so depressed by his disappointments as to neglect any opportunity that was offered of advancing his interest. When the Princess Anne was married, he wrote a poem upon her departure, only, as he de- 20 clared, 'because it was expected from him,' and he was not willing to bar his own prospects by any appearance of neglect.<sup>1</sup>

He never mentioned any advantage gained by this poem, or any regard that was paid to it; and therefore 25 it is likely that it was considered at Court as an act of duty, to which he was obliged by his dependence, and which it was therefore not necessary to reward by any new favor: or perhaps the Queen really intended his advancement, and therefore thought it superfluous 30 to lavish presents upon a man whom she intended to establish for life.

About this time not only his hopes were in danger of being frustrated, but his pension likewise of being obstructed by an accidental calumny. The writer of *The* 35 *Daily Courant*, a paper then published under the direction of the ministry, charged him with a crime, which

<sup>1</sup> Printed in the late collection.

though not very great in itself, would have been remarkably invidious in him, and might very justly have incensed the Queen against him. He was accused by name of influencing elections against the Court, by appearing at the head of a Tory mob; nor did the accuser 5 fail to aggravate his crime, by representing it as the effect of the most atrocious ingratitude, and a kind of rebellion against the Queen, who had first preserved him from an infamous death, and afterwards distinguished him by her favor, and supported him by her charity. 10 The charge, as it was open and confident, was likewise by good fortune very particular. The place of the transaction was mentioned, and the whole series of the rioter's conduct related. This exactness made Mr. Savage's vindication easy; for he never had in his 15 life seen the place which was declared to be the scene of his wickedness, nor ever had been present in any town when its representatives were chosen. This answer he therefore made haste to publish, with all the circumstances necessary to make it credible; and very reason- 20 ably demanded, that the accusation should be retracted in the same paper, that he might no longer suffer the imputation of sedition and ingratitude. This demand was likewise pressed by him in a private letter to the author of the paper, who either trusting to the pro- 25 tection of those whose defense he had undertaken, or having entertained some personal malice against Mr. Savage, or fearing lest, by retracting so confident an assertion, he should impair the credit of his paper, refused to give him that satisfaction. 30

Mr. Savage therefore thought it necessary, to his own vindication, to prosecute him in the King's Bench; but as he did not find any ill effects from the accusation, having sufficiently cleared his innocence, he thought any farther procedure would have the appearance of 35 revenge; and therefore willingly dropped it.

He saw soon afterwards a process commenced in the

same court against himself, on an information in which he was accused of writing and publishing an obscene pamphlet.

It was always Mr. Savage's desire to be distinguished; 5 and, when any controversy became popular, he never wanted some reason for engaging in it with great ardor, and appearing at the head of the party which he had chosen. As he was never celebrated for his prudence, he had no sooner taken his side, and informed himself 10 of the chief topics of the dispute, than he took all opportunities of asserting and propagating his principles, without much regard to his own interest, or any other visible design than that of drawing upon himself the attention of mankind.

15 The dispute between the Bishop of London and the Chancellor is well known to have been for some time the chief topic of political conversation; and therefore Mr. Savage, in pursuance of his character, endeavored to become conspicuous among the controvertists with 20 which every coffee-house was filled on that occasion. He was an indefatigable opposer of all the claims of ecclesiastical power, though he did not know on what they were founded; and was therefore no friend to the Bishop of London. But he had another reason for appearing 25 as a warm advocate for Dr. Rundle; for he was the friend of Mr. Foster and Mr. Thomson, who were the friends of Mr. Savage.

Thus remote was his interest in the question, which however, as he imagined, concerned him so nearly, that 30 it was not sufficient to harangue and dispute, but necessary likewise to write upon it.

He therefore engaged with great ardor in a new poem, called by him *The Progress of a Divine*; in which he conducts a profligate priest, by all the gradations 85 of wickedness, from a poor curacy in the country to the highest preferments of the church; and describes with that humor which was natural to him, and that



knowledge which was extended to all the diversities of human life, his behavior in every station; and insinuates that this priest, thus accomplished, found at last a patron in the Bishop of London.

When he was asked by one of his friends, on what 5 pretense he could charge the bishop with such an action; he had no more to say than that he had only inverted the accusation; and that he thought it reasonable to believe, that he who obstructed the rise of a good man without reason, would, for bad reasons, promote the 10 exaltation of a villain.

The clergy were universally provoked by this satire; and Savage, who, as was his constant practice, had set his name to his performance, was censured in *The Weekly Miscellany*<sup>1</sup> with severity, which he did not seem 15 inclined to forget.

But a return of invective was not thought a sufficient punishment. The court of King's Bench was therefore moved against him; and he was obliged to return an answer to a charge of obscenity. It was urged in his 20 defense, that obscenity was criminal when it was intended to promote the practice of vice; but that Mr. Savage had only introduced obscene ideas, with the view of exposing them to detestation, and of amending the age by showing the deformity of wickedness. This 25

<sup>1</sup> A short satire was likewise published in the same paper, in which were the following lines:

For cruel murder doom'd to hempen death,  
Savage, by royal grace, prolong'd his breath.  
Well might you think he spent his future years  
In prayer, and fasting, and repentant tears.

—But, 'O vain hope!'—the truly Savage cries,  
'Priests, and their slavish doctrines, I despise.  
Shall I—'

Who, by free-thinking to free action fir'd,  
In midnight brawls a deathless name acquir'd,  
Now stoop to learn of ecclesiastic men?—  
No, arm'd with rhyme, at priests I'll take my aim,  
Though prudence bids me murder but their fame.'

WEEKLY MISCELLANY.

An answer was published in *The Gentleman's Magazine*,

plea was admitted; and Sir Philip Yorke, who then presided in that court, dismissed the information with encomiums upon the purity and excellence of Mr. Savage's writings.

- 5 The prosecution, however, answered in some measure the purpose of those by whom it was set on foot; for Mr. Savage was so far intimidated by it, that, when the edition of his poem was sold, he did not venture to reprint it; so that it was in a short time forgotten, or  
10 forgotten by all but those whom it offended.

It is said that some endeavors were used to incense the queen against him: but he found advocates to obviate at least part of their effect; for, though he was never advanced, he still continued to receive his  
15 pension.

This poem drew more infamy upon him than any incident of his life; and, as his conduct cannot be vindicated, it is proper to secure his memory from re-

written by an unknown hand, from which the following lines are selected:

Transform'd by thoughtless rage, and midnight wine,  
From malice free, and push'd without design;  
In equal brawl if Savage lung'd a thrust,  
And brought the youth a victim to the dust,  
So strong the hand of accident appears,  
The royal hand from guilt and vengeance clears.

Instead of wasting 'all thy future years,  
Savage, in prayer and vain repentant tears,'  
Exert thy pen to mend a vicious age,  
To curb the priest, and sink his high-church rage;  
To show what frauds the holy vestments hide,  
The nests of av'rice, lust, and pedant pride:  
Then change the scene, let merit brightly shine,  
And round the patriot twist the wreath divine;  
The heav'nly guide deliver down to fame;  
In well-tun'd lays transmit a Foster's name;  
Touch ev'ry passion with harmonious art,  
Exalt the genius, and correct the heart.  
Thus future times shall royal grace extol:  
Thus polish'd lines thy present fame enrol.

—But grant—  
—Maliciously that Savage plung'd the steel,  
And made the youth its shining vengeance feel;  
My soul abhors the act, the man detests,  
But more the bigotry in priestly breasts.

GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE, May, 1735.

proach, by informing those whom he made his enemies, that he never intended to repeat the provocation; and that, though, whenever he thought he had any reason to complain of the clergy, he used to threaten them with a new edition of *The Progress of a Divine*, it was his 5 calm and settled resolution to suppress it for ever.

He once intended to have made a better reparation for the folly or injustice with which he might be charged, by writing another poem, called *The Progress of a Free-thinker*, whom he intended to lead through all the stages 10 of vice and folly, to convert him from virtue to wickedness, and from religion to infidelity, by all the modish sophistry used for that purpose; and at last to dismiss him by his own hand into the other world.

That he did not execute this design is a real loss to 15 mankind; for he was too well acquainted with all the scenes of debauchery to have failed in his representations of them, and too zealous for virtue not to have represented them in such a manner as should expose them either to ridicule or detestation. 20

But this plan was, like others, formed and laid aside, till the vigor of his imagination was spent, and the effervescence of invention had subsided; but soon gave way to some other design, which pleased by its novelty for a while, and then was neglected like the former. 25

He was still in his usual exigencies, having no certain support but the pension allowed him by the queen, which, though it might have kept an exact economist from want, was very far from being sufficient for Mr. Savage, who had never been accustomed to dismiss any 30 of his appetites without the gratification which they solicited, and whom nothing but want of money withheld from partaking of every pleasure that fell within his view.

His conduct with regard to his pension was very 35 particular. No sooner had he changed the bill, than he vanished from the sight of all his acquaintances,

and lay for some time out of the reach of all the inquiries that friendship or curiosity could make after him. At length he appeared again penniless as before, but never informed even those whom he seemed to regard most where he had been; nor was his retreat ever discovered.

This was his constant practice during the whole time that he received the pension from the queen: he regularly disappeared and returned. He, indeed, affirmed 10 that he retired to study, and that the money supported him in solitude for many months; but his friends declared, that the short time in which it was spent sufficiently confuted his own account of his conduct.

His politeness and his wit still raised him friends, 15 who were desirous of setting him at length free from that indigence by which he had been hitherto oppressed; and therefore solicited Sir Robert Walpole in his favor with so much earnestness, that they obtained a promise of the next place that should become vacant, not exceeding two hundred pounds a year. This promise was 20 made with an uncommon declaration, 'that it was not the promise of a minister to a petitioner, but of a friend to his friend.'

Mr. Savage now concluded himself set at ease for 25 ever, and, as he observes in a poem written on that incident of his life, 'trusted and was trusted'; but soon found that his confidence was ill-grounded, and this friendly promise was not inviolable. He spent a long time in solicitations, and at last despaired and desisted.

30 He did not indeed deny that he had given the minister some reason to believe that he should not strengthen his own interest by advancing him, for he had taken care to distinguish himself in coffee-houses as an advocate for the ministry of the last years of Queen Anne, and 35 was always ready to justify the conduct, and exalt the character of Lord Bolingbroke, whom he mentions with great regard in an *Epistle upon Authors*, which

he wrote about that time, but was too wise to publish, and of which only some fragments have appeared, inserted by him in the Magazine after his retirement.

To despair was not, however, the character of Savage; when one patronage failed, he had recourse to another. 5 The prince was now extremely popular, and had very liberally rewarded the merit of some writers whom Mr. Savage did not think superior to himself, and therefore he resolved to address a poem to him.

For this purpose he made choice of a subject which 10 could regard only persons of the highest rank and greatest affluence, and which was therefore proper for a poem intended to procure the patronage of a prince; and, having retired for some time to Richmond, that he might prosecute his design in full tranquillity, without the 15 temptations of pleasure, or the solicitations of creditors, by which his meditations were in equal danger of being disconcerted, he produced a poem *On Public Spirit, with regard to Public Works*.

The plan of this poem is very extensive, and comprises 20 a multitude of topics, each of which might furnish matter sufficient for a long performance, and of which some have already employed more eminent writers; but as he was perhaps not fully acquainted with the whole extent of his own design, and was writing to obtain 25 a supply of wants too pressing to admit of long or accurate inquiries, he passes negligently over many public works, which, even in his own opinion, deserved to be more elaborately treated.

But, though he may sometimes disappoint his reader 30 by transient touches upon these subjects, which have often been considered, and therefore naturally raise expectations, he must be allowed amply to compensate his omissions, by expatiating, in the conclusion of his work, upon a kind of beneficence not yet celebrated 35 by any eminent poet, though it now appears more susceptible of embellishments, more adapted to exalt the

ideas, and affect the passions, than many of those which have hitherto been thought most worthy of the ornaments of verse. The settlement of colonies in uninhabited countries, the establishment of those in security, 5 whose misfortunes have made their own country no longer pleasing or safe, the acquisition of property without injury to any, the appropriation of the waste and luxuriant bounties of nature, and the enjoyment of those gifts which heaven has scattered upon regions 10 uncultivated and unoccupied, cannot be considered without giving rise to a great number of pleasing ideas, and bewildering the imagination in delightful prospects; and, therefore, whatever speculations they may produce in those who have confined themselves to political studies, 15 naturally fixed the attention, and excited the applause, of a poet. The politician, when he considers men driven into other countries for shelter, and obliged to retire to forests and deserts, and pass their lives, and fix their posterity, in the remotest corners of the world, to avoid 20 those hardships which they suffer or fear in their native place, may very properly inquire, why the legislature does not provide a remedy for these miseries, rather than encourage an escape from them. He may conclude that the flight of every honest man is a loss to the 25 community; that those who are unhappy without guilt ought to be relieved; and the life, which is overburdened by accidental calamities, set at ease by the care of the public; and that those, who have by misconduct forfeited their claim to favor, ought rather to be made use- 30 ful to the society which they have injured, than driven from it. But the poet is employed in a more pleasing undertaking than that of proposing laws which, however just or expedient, will never be made; or endeavoring to reduce to rational schemes of government societies which were formed by chance, and are conducted by the private passions of those who preside in them. He guides the unhappy fugitive from want and per-

secution, to plenty, quiet, and security, and seats him in scenes of peaceful solitude, and undisturbed repose.

Savage has not forgotten, amidst the pleasing sentiments which this prospect of retirement suggested to him, to censure those crimes which have been generally 5 committed by the discoverers of new regions, and to expose the enormous wickedness of making war upon barbarous nations because they cannot resist, and of invading countries because they are fruitful; of extending navigation only to propagate vice, and of visiting 10 distant lands only to lay them waste. He has asserted the natural equality of mankind, and endeavored to suppress that pride which inclines men to imagine that right is the consequence of power.

His description of the various miseries which force 15 men to seek for refuge in distant countries affords another instance of his proficiency in the important and extensive study of human life; and the tenderness with which he recounts them, another proof of his humanity and benevolence. 20

It is observable that the close of this poem discovers a change which experience had made in Mr. Savage's opinions. In a poem written by him in his youth, and published in his *Miscellanies*, he declares his contempt of the contracted views and narrow prospects 25 of the middle state of life, and declares his resolution either to tower like the cedar, or be trampled like the shrub; but in this poem, though addressed to a prince, he mentions this state of life as comprising those who ought most to attract reward, those who merit most 30 the confidence of power, and the familiarity of greatness; and, accidentally mentioning this passage to one of his friends, declared, that in his opinion all the virtue of mankind was comprehended in that state.

In describing villas and gardens, he did not omit to 35 condemn that absurd custom which prevails among the English, of permitting servants to receive money from

strangers for the entertainment that they receive, and therefore inserted in his poem these lines:

- But what the flow'ring pride of gardens rare,  
However royal, or however fair,  
5 If gates, which to access should still give way,  
Ope but, like Peter's paradise, for pay?  
If perquisited varlets frequent stand,  
And each new walk must a new tax demand?  
What foreign eye but with contempt surveys?  
10 What Muse shall from oblivion snatch their praise?

But before the publication of his performance he recollected that the queen allowed her garden and cave at Richmond to be shown for money; and that she so openly countenanced the practice, that she had be-  
15 stowed the privilege of showing them as a place of profit on a man, whose merit she valued herself upon rewarding, though she gave him only the liberty of disgracing his country.

He therefore thought, with more prudence than was  
20 often exerted by him, that the publication of these lines might be officiously represented as an insult upon the queen, to whom he owed his life and his subsistence: and that the propriety of his observation would be no security against the censures which the unseasonableness  
25 of it might draw upon him; he therefore suppressed the passage in the first edition, but after the queen's death thought the same caution no longer necessary, and restored it to the proper place.

The poem was, therefore, published without any po-  
30 litical faults, and inscribed to the prince; but Mr. Savage, having no friend upon whom he could prevail to present it to him, had no other method of attracting his observation than the publication of frequent advertisements, and therefore received no reward from his  
35 patron, however generous on other occasions.

This disappointment he never mentioned without indignation, being by some means or other confident that the prince was not ignorant of his address to him; and insinuated that if any advances in popularity could



have been made by distinguishing him, he had not written without notice, or without reward.

He was once inclined to have presented his poem in person, and sent to the printer for a copy with that design; but either his opinion changed, or his resolution 5 deserted him, and he continued to resent neglect without attempting to force himself into regard.

Nor was the public much more favorable than his patron; for only seventy-two were sold, though the performance was much commended by some whose judgment in that kind of writing is generally allowed. But Savage easily reconciled himself to mankind, without imputing any defect to his work, by observing that his poem was unluckily published two days after the prorogation of the Parliament, and by consequence at 15 a time when all those who could be expected to regard it were in the hurry of preparing for their departure, or engaged in taking leave of others upon their dismission from public affairs.

It must be, however, allowed, in justification of the 20 public, that this performance is not the most excellent of Mr. Savage's works; and that, though it cannot be denied to contain many striking sentiments, majestic lines, and just observations, it is in general not sufficiently polished in the language, or enlivened in the 25 imagery, or digested in the plan.

Thus his poem contributed nothing to the alleviation of his poverty, which was such as very few could have supported with equal patience; but to which, it must likewise be confessed, that few would have been exposed, who received punctually fifty pounds a year; a salary which, though by no means equal to the demands of vanity and luxury, is yet found sufficient to support families above want, and was undoubtedly more than the necessities of life require. 35

But no sooner had he received his pension, than he withdrew to his darling privacy, from which he returned

in a short time to his former distress, and for some part of the year generally lived by chance, eating only when he was invited to the tables of his acquaintances, from which the meanness of his dress often excluded him, 5 when the politeness and variety of his conversation would have been thought a sufficient recompense for his entertainment.

He lodged as much by accident as he dined, and passed the night sometimes in mean houses, which are 10 set open at night to any casual wanderers, sometimes in cellars, among the riot and filth of the meanest and most profligate of the rabble; and sometimes, when he had not money to support even the expenses of these receptacles, walked about the streets till he was weary, 15 and lay down in the summer upon a bulk, or in the winter, with his associates in poverty, among the ashes of a glass-house.

In this manner were passed those days and those nights which nature had enabled him to have employed 20 in elevated speculations, useful studies, or pleasing conversation. On a bulk, in a cellar, or in a glass-house, among thieves and beggars, was to be found the author of *The Wanderer*, the man of exalted sentiments, extensive views, and curious observations; the man whose 25 remarks on life might have assisted the statesman, whose ideas of virtue might have enlightened the moralist, whose eloquence might have influenced senates, and whose delicacy might have polished courts.

It cannot but be imagined that such necessities might 30 sometimes force him upon disreputable practices; and it is probable that these lines in *The Wanderer* were occasioned by his reflections on his own conduct:

Though misery leads to happiness and truth,  
Unequal to the load, this languid youth,

35 (O, let none censure, if, untried by grief,  
If, amidst woe, unttempted by relief),  
He stoop'd reluctant to low arts of shame,  
Which then, ev'n then, he scorn'd, and blush'd to name.

Whoever was acquainted with him was certain to be solicited for small sums, which the frequency of the request made in time considerable; and he was therefore quickly shunned by those who were become familiar enough to be trusted with his necessities; but his 5 rambling manner of life, and constant appearance at houses of public resort, always procured him a new succession of friends, whose kindness had not been exhausted by repeated requests; so that he was seldom absolutely without resources, but had in his utmost 10 exigencies this comfort, that he always imagined himself sure of speedy relief.

It was observed, that he always asked favors of this kind without the least submission or apparent consciousness of dependence, and that he did not seem 15 to look upon a compliance with his request as an obligation that deserved any extraordinary acknowledgments; but a refusal was resented by him as an affront, or complained of as an injury; nor did he readily reconcile himself to those who either denied to lend, 20 or gave him afterwards any intimation that they expected to be repaid.

He was sometimes so far compassionated by those who knew both his merit and distresses, that they received him into their families, but they soon discovered 25 him to be a very incommodious inmate; for, being always accustomed to an irregular manner of life, he could not confine himself to any stated hours, or pay any regard to the rules of a family, but would prolong his conversation till midnight, without considering that 30 business might require his friend's application in the morning; and, when he had persuaded himself to retire to bed, was not, without equal difficulty, called up to dinner; it was therefore impossible to pay him any distinction without the entire subversion of all economy, 35 a kind of establishment which, wherever he went, he always appeared ambitious to overthrow.

It must, therefore, be acknowledged, in justification of mankind, that it was not always by the negligence or coldness of his friends that Savage was distressed, but because it was in reality very difficult to preserve  
5 him long in a state of ease. To supply him with money was a hopeless attempt; for no sooner did he see himself master of a sum sufficient to set him free from care for a day, than he became profuse and luxurious. When once he had entered a tavern, or engaged in  
10 a scheme of pleasure, he never retired till want of money obliged him to some new expedient. If he was entertained in a family, nothing was any longer to be regarded there but amusements and jollity; wherever Savage entered, he immediately expected that order and  
15 business should fly before him, that all should thenceforward be left to hazard, and that no dull principle of domestic management should be opposed to his inclination, or intrude upon his gaiety.

His distresses, however afflictive, never dejected him; in his lowest state he wanted not spirit to assert the  
20 natural dignity of wit, and was always ready to repress that insolence which superiority of fortune incited, and to trample on that reputation which rose upon any other basis than that of merit: he never admitted any gross  
25 familiarities, or submitted to be treated otherwise than as an equal. Once, when he was without lodging, meat, or clothes, one of his friends, a man not indeed remarkable for moderation in his prosperity, left a message, that he desired to see him about nine in the morning.  
30 Savage knew that his intention was to assist him; but was very much disgusted that he should presume to prescribe the hour of his attendance, and, I believe, refused to visit him, and rejected his kindness.

The same invincible temper, whether firmness or obstinacy, appeared in his conduct to the lord Tyrconnel, from whom he very frequently demanded, that the allowance which was once paid him should be restored;

but with whom he never appeared to entertain for a moment the thought of soliciting a reconciliation, and whom he treated at once with all the haughtiness of superiority, and all the bitterness of resentment. He wrote to him, not in a style of supplication or respect, 5 but of reproach, menace, and contempt; and appeared determined, if he ever regained his allowance, to hold it only by the right of conquest.

As many more can discover that a man is richer than that he is wiser than themselves, superiority of under- 10 standing is not so readily acknowledged as that of fortune; nor is that haughtiness, which the consciousness of great abilities incites, borne with the same submission as the tyranny of affluence; and therefore Savage, by asserting his claim to deference and regard, 15 and by treating those with contempt whom better fortune animated to rebel against him, did not fail to raise a great number of enemies in the different classes of mankind. Those who thought themselves raised above him by the advantages of riches, hated him because they 20 found no protection from the petulance of his wit. Those who were esteemed for their writings feared him as a critic, and maligned him as a rival, and almost all the smaller wits were his professed enemies.

Among these Mr. Miller so far indulged his resent- 25 ment as to introduce him in a farce, and direct him to be personated on the stage, in a dress like that which he then wore; a mean insult, which only insinuated that Savage had but one coat, and which was therefore despised by him rather than resented; for, though he 30 wrote a lampoon against Miller, he never printed it: and as no other person ought to prosecute that revenge from which the person who was injured desisted, I shall not preserve what Mr. Savage suppressed: of which the publication would indeed have been a punishment 35 too severe for so impotent an assault.

The great hardships of poverty were to Savage not

the want of lodging or of food, but the neglect and contempt which it drew upon him. He complained that, as his affairs grew desperate, he found his reputation for capacity visibly decline; that his opinion in 5 questions of criticism was no longer regarded, when his coat was out of fashion; and that those who, in the interval of his prosperity, were always encouraging him to great undertakings by encomiums on his genius and assurances of success, now received any mention of 10 his designs with coldness, thought that the subjects on which he proposed to write were very difficult, and were ready to inform him, that the event of a poem was uncertain, that an author ought to employ much time in the consideration of his plan, and not presume to 15 sit down to write in confidence of a few cursory ideas, and a superficial knowledge; difficulties were started on all sides, and he was no longer qualified for any performance but *The Volunteer Laureate*.

Yet even this kind of contempt never depressed him; 20 for he always preserved a steady confidence in his own capacity, and believed nothing above his reach which he should at any time earnestly endeavor to attain. He formed schemes of the same kind with regard to knowledge and to fortune, and flattered himself with advances 25 to be made in science, as with riches to be enjoyed in some distant period of his life. For the acquisition of knowledge he was indeed far better qualified than for that of riches; for he was naturally inquisitive, and desirous of the conversation of those from whom any 30 information was to be obtained, but by no means solicitous to improve those opportunities that were sometimes offered of raising his fortune; and he was remarkably retentive of his ideas, which, when once he was in possession of them, rarely forsook him; a quality 35 which could never be communicated to his money.

While he was thus wearing out his life in expectation that the queen would some time recollect her promise, he

had recourse to the usual practice of writers, and published proposals for printing his works by subscription, to which he was encouraged by the success of many who had not a better right to the favor of the public; but, whatever was the reason, he did not find the world 5 equally inclined to favor him; and he observed, with some discontent, that though he offered his works at half-a-guinea, he was able to procure but a small number in comparison with those who subscribed twice as much to Duck.

10

Nor was it without indignation that he saw his proposals neglected by the queen, who patronised Mr. Duck's with uncommon ardor, and incited a competition among those who attended the court, who should most promote his interest, and who should first offer a subscription. 15 This was a distinction to which Mr. Savage made no scruple of asserting, that his birth, his misfortunes, and his genius, gave him a fairer title, than could be pleaded by him on whom it was conferred.

Savage's applications were, however, not universally 20 unsuccessful; for some of the nobility countenanced his design, encouraged his proposals, and subscribed with great liberality. He related of the Duke of Chandos particularly, that, upon receiving his proposals, he sent him ten guineas.

25

But the money which his subscriptions afforded him was not less volatile than that which he received from his other schemes; whenever a subscription was paid him, he went to a tavern; and, as money so collected is necessarily received in small sums, he never was able 30 to send his poems to the press, but for many years continued his solicitation, and squandered whatever he obtained.

This project of printing his works was frequently revived; and, as his proposals grew obsolete, new ones 35 were printed with fresher dates. To form schemes for the publication, was one of his favorite amusements;

nor was he more at ease than when, with any friend who readily fell in with his schemes, he was adjusting the print, forming the advertisements, and regulating the dispersion of his new edition, which he really intended some time to publish, and which, as long experience had shown him the impossibility of printing the volume together, he at last determined to divide into weekly or monthly numbers, that the profits of the first might supply the expenses of the next.

10 Thus he spent his time in mean expedients and tormenting suspense, living for the greatest part in the fear of prosecutions from his creditors, and consequently skulking in obscure parts of the town, of which he was no stranger to the remotest corners. But wherever  
15 he came, his address secured him friends, whom his necessities soon alienated; so that he had perhaps a more numerous acquaintance than any man ever before attained, there being scarcely any person eminent on any account to whom he was not known, or whose char-  
20 acter he was not in some degree able to delineate.

To the acquisition of this extensive acquaintance every circumstance of his life contributed. He excelled in the arts of conversation, and therefore willingly practised them. He had seldom any home, or even a lodg-  
25 ing in which he could be private; and therefore was driven into public houses for the common conveniences of life and supports of nature. He was always ready to comply with every invitation, having no employment to withhold him, and often no money to provide for  
30 himself; and by dining with one company, he never failed of obtaining an introduction into another.

Thus dissipated was his life, and thus casual his subsistence; yet did not the distraction of his views hinder him from reflection, nor the uncertainty of his  
35 condition depress his gaiety. When he had wandered about without any fortunate adventure by which he was led into a tavern, he sometimes retired into the



fields, and was able to employ his mind in study, or amuse it with pleasing imaginations; and seldom appeared to be melancholy, but when some sudden misfortune had just fallen upon him, and even then in a few moments he would disentangle himself from his perplexity, adopt the subject of conversation, and apply his mind wholly to the objects that others presented to it.

This life, unhappy as it may be already imagined, was yet embittered, in 1738, with new calamities. The death of the queen deprived him of all the prospects of preferment with which he so long entertained his imagination; and, as Sir Robert Walpole had before given him reason to believe that he never intended the performance of his promise, he was now abandoned again to fortune.

He was, however, at that time, supported by a friend; and as it was not his custom to look out for distant calamities, or to feel any other pain than that which forced itself upon his senses, he was not much afflicted at his loss, and perhaps comforted himself that his pension would be now continued without the annual tribute of a panegyric.

Another expectation contributed likewise to support him: he had taken a resolution to write a second tragedy upon the story of Sir Thomas Overbury, in which he preserved a few lines of his former play, but made a total alteration of the plan, added new incidents, and introduced new characters; so that it was a new tragedy, not a revival of the former.

Many of his friends blamed him for not making choice of another subject; but in vindication of himself, he asserted, that it was not easy to find a better; and that he thought it his interest to extinguish the memory of the first tragedy, which he could only do by writing one less defective upon the same story; by which he should entirely defeat the artifice of the

booksellers, who, after the death of any author of reputation, are always industrious to swell his works, by uniting his worst productions with his best.

In the execution of this scheme, however, he proceeded but slowly, and probably only employed himself upon it when he could find no other amusement; but he pleased himself with counting the profits, and perhaps imagined that the theatrical reputation which he was about to acquire would be equivalent to all that he had lost by the death of his patroness.

He did not, in confidence of his approaching riches, neglect the measures proper to secure the continuance of his pension, though some of his favorers thought him culpable for omitting to write on her death; but, on her birthday next year, he gave a proof of the solidity of his judgment, and the power of his genius. He knew that the track of elegy had been so long beaten, that it was impossible to travel in it without treading in the footsteps of those who had gone before him; and that therefore it was necessary, that he might distinguish himself from the herd of encomiasts, to find out some new walk of funeral panegyric.

This difficult task he performed in such a manner that his poem may be justly ranked among the best pieces that the death of princes has produced. By transferring the mention of her death, to her birthday, he has formed a happy combination of topics, which any other man would have thought it very difficult to connect in one view, but which he has united in such a manner, that the relation between them appears natural; and it may be justly said, that what no other man would have thought on, it now appears scarcely possible for any man to miss.

The beauty of this peculiar combination of images is so masterly, that it is sufficient to set this poem above censure; and therefore it is not necessary to mention many other delicate touches which may be found in

it, and which would deservedly be admired in any other performance.

To these proofs of his genius may be added, from the same poem, an instance of his prudence, an excellence for which he was not so often distinguished; 5 he does not forget to remind the king, in the most delicate and artful manner, of continuing his pension.

With regard to the success of this address, he was for some time in suspense, but was in no great degree solicitous about it; and continued his labor upon his 10 new tragedy with great tranquillity, till the friend who had for a considerable time supported him, removing his family to another place, took occasion to dismiss him. It then became necessary to inquire more diligently what was determined in his affair, having reason 15 to suspect that no great favor was intended him, because he had not received his pension at the usual time.

It is said that he did not take those methods of retrieving his interest which were most likely to succeed; and some of those who were employed in the 20 exchequer cautioned him against too much violence in his proceedings: but Mr. Savage, who seldom regulated his conduct by the advice of others, gave way to his passion, and demanded of Sir Robert Walpole, at his levee, the reason of the distinction that was made be- 25 tween him and the other pensioners of the queen, with a degree of roughness, which perhaps determined him to withdraw what had been only delayed.

Whatever was the crime of which he was accused or suspected, and whatever influence was employed against 30 him, he received soon after an account that took from him all hopes of regaining his pension; and he had now no prospect of subsistence but from his play, and he knew no way of living for the time required to finish it.

35

So peculiar were the misfortunes of this man, deprived of an estate and title by a particular law, ex-

posed and abandoned by a mother, defrauded by a mother of a fortune which his father had allotted him, he entered the world without a friend; and though his abilities forced themselves into esteem and reputation, 5 he was never able to obtain any real advantage, and whatever prospects arose, were always intercepted as he began to approach them. The king's intentions in his favor were frustrated; his dedication to the prince, whose generosity on every other occasion was eminent, 10 procured him no reward; Sir Robert Walpole, who valued himself upon keeping his promise to others, broke it to him without regret; and the bounty of the queen was, after her death, withdrawn from him, and from him only.

15 Such were his misfortunes, which yet he bore, not only with decency, but with cheerfulness; nor was his gaiety clouded even by his last disappointments, though he was in a short time reduced to the lowest degree of distress, and often wanted both lodging and food. At 20 this time he gave another instance of the insurmountable obstinacy of his spirit: his clothes were worn out; and he received notice, that at a coffee-house some clothes and linen were left for him; the person who sent them did not, I believe, inform him to whom he 25 was to be obliged, that he might spare the perplexity of acknowledging the benefit; but though the offer was so far generous, it was made with some neglect of ceremonies, which Mr. Savage so much resented, that he refused the present, and declined to enter the house 30 till the clothes that had been designed for him were taken away.

His distress was now publicly known, and his friends, therefore, thought it proper to concert some measures for his relief; and one of them wrote a letter to him, 35 in which he expressed his concern 'for the miserable withdrawing of his pension'; and gave him hopes that in a short time he should find himself supplied with

a competence, 'without any dependence on those little creatures which we are pleased to call the Great.'

The scheme proposed for this happy and independent subsistence was, that he should retire into Wales, and receive an allowance of fifty pounds a year, to be raised 5 by a subscription, on which he was to live privately in a cheap place, without aspiring any more to affluence, or having any farther care of reputation.

This offer Mr. Savage gladly accepted, though with intentions very different from those of his friends; 10 for they proposed that he should continue an exile from London for ever, and spend all the remaining part of his life at Swansea; but he designed only to take the opportunity which their scheme offered him, of retreating for a short time, that he might prepare his play for 15 the stage, and his other works for the press, and then to return to London to exhibit his tragedy, and live upon the profits of his own labor.

With regard to his works, he proposed very great improvements, which would have required much time, 20 or great application; and, when he had finished them, he designed to do justice to his subscribers, by publishing them according to his proposals.

As he was ready to entertain himself with future pleasures, he had planned out a scheme of life for the 25 country, of which he had no knowledge but from pastorals and songs. He imagined that he should be transported to scenes of flowery felicity, like those which one poet has reflected to another; and had projected a perpetual round of innocent pleasures, of which he 30 suspected no interruption from pride, or ignorance, or brutality.

With these expectations he was so enchanted, that when he was once gently reproached by a friend for submitting to live upon a subscription, and advised 35 rather by a resolute exertion of his abilities to support himself, he could not bear to debar himself from the

happiness which was to be found in the calm of a cottage, or lose the opportunity of listening, without intermission, to the melody of the nightingale, which he believed was to be heard from every bramble, and which  
5 he did not fail to mention as a very important part of the happiness of a country life.

While this scheme was ripening, his friends directed him to take a lodging in the liberties of the Fleet, that he might be secure from his creditors, and sent him  
10 every Monday a guinea, which he commonly spent before the next morning, and trusted, after his usual manner, the remaining part of the week to the bounty of fortune.

He now began very sensibly to feel the miseries of  
15 dependence. Those by whom he was to be supported began to prescribe to him with an air of authority, which he knew not how decently to resent, nor patiently to bear; and he soon discovered, from the conduct of most of his subscribers, that he was yet in the hands of  
20 'little creatures.'

Of the insolence that he was obliged to suffer, he gave many instances, of which none appeared to raise his indignation to a greater height than the method which was taken of furnishing him with clothes. In-  
25 stead of consulting him, and allowing him to send a tailor his orders for what they thought proper to allow him, they proposed to send for a tailor to take his measure, and then to consult how they should equip him.

30 This treatment was not very delicate, nor was it such as Savage's humanity would have suggested to him on a like occasion; but it had scarcely deserved mention, had it not, by affecting him in an uncommon degree, shown the peculiarity of his character. Upon  
35 hearing the design that was formed, he came to the lodging of a friend with the most violent agonies of rage; and, being asked what it could be that gave him

such disturbance, he replied with the utmost vehemence of indignation, 'That they had sent for a tailor to measure him.'

How the affair ended was never inquired, for fear of renewing his uneasiness. It is probable that, upon 5 recollection, he submitted with a good grace to what he could not avoid, and that he discovered no resentment where he had no power.

He was, however, not humbled to implicit and universal compliance; for when the gentleman, who had first 10 informed him of the design to support him by a subscription, attempted to procure a reconciliation with the lord Tyrconnel, he could by no means be prevailed upon to comply with the measures that were proposed.

A letter was written for him<sup>1</sup> to Sir William Lemon, 15 to prevail upon him to interpose his good offices with Lord Tyrconnel, in which he solicited Sir William's assistance 'for a man who really needed it as much as any man could well do'; and informed him, that he was retiring 'for ever to a place where he should no 20 more trouble his relations, friends, or enemies'; he confessed, that his passion had betrayed him to some conduct, with regard to Lord Tyrconnel, 'for which he could not but heartily ask his pardon'; and as he imagined Lord Tyrconnel's passion might be yet so high 25 that he would not 'receive a letter from him,' begged that Sir William would endeavor to soften him; and expressed his hopes that he would comply with his request, and that 'so small a relation would not harden his heart against him.'

30

That any man should presume to dictate a letter to him, was not very agreeable to Mr. Savage; and therefore he was, before he had opened it, not much inclined to approve it. But when he read it, he found it contained sentiments entirely opposite to his own, and, as 35 he asserted, to the truth, and therefore, instead of copy-

<sup>1</sup>By Mr. Pope.

ing it, wrote his friend a letter full of masculine resentment and warm expostulations. He very justly observed that the style was too supplicatory, and the representation too abject, and that he ought at least to have made  
5 him complain with 'the dignity of a gentleman in distress.' He declared that he would not write the paragraph in which he was to ask Lord Tyrconnel's pardon; for 'he despised his pardon, and therefore could not heartily, and would not hypocritically, ask it.' He re-  
10 marked that his friend made a very unreasonable distinction between himself and him; for, says he, when you mention men of high rank 'in your own character,' they are 'those little creatures whom we are pleased to call the Great'; but when you address them 'in mine,'  
15 no servility is sufficiently humble. He then with great propriety explained the ill consequences which might be expected from such a letter, which his relations would print in their own defense, and which would for ever be produced as a full answer to all that he should allege  
20 against them; for he always intended to publish a minute account of the treatment which he had received. It is to be remembered, to the honor of the gentleman by whom this letter was drawn up, that he yielded to Mr. Savage's reasons, and agreed that it ought to be sup-  
25 pressed.

After many alterations and delays, a subscription was at length raised, which did not amount to fifty pounds a year, though twenty were paid by one gentleman; such was the generosity of mankind, that what had  
30 been done by a player without solicitation, could not now be effected by application and interest; and Savage had a great number to court and to obey for a pension less than that which Mrs. Oldfield paid him without exacting any servilities.

85 Mr. Savage, however, was satisfied, and willing to retire, and was convinced that the allowance, though scanty, would be more than sufficient for him, being



now determined to commence a rigid economist, and to live according to the exactest rules of frugality; for nothing was in his opinion more contemptible than a man, who, when he knew his income, exceeded it; and yet he confessed that instances of such folly were 5 too common, and lamented that some men were not to be trusted with their own money.

Full of these salutary resolutions, he left London in July, 1739, having taken leave with great tenderness of his friends, and parted from the author of this narrative with tears in his eyes. He was furnished with fifteen guineas, and informed that they would be sufficient, not only for the expense of his journey, but for his support in Wales for some time; and that there remained but little more of the first collection. He promised a strict adherence to his maxims of parsimony, and went away in the stage-coach; nor did his friends expect to hear from him till he informed them of his arrival at Swansea. 15

But, when they least expected, arrived a letter dated 20 the fourteenth day after his departure, in which he sent them word, that he was yet upon the road, and without money; and that he therefore could not proceed without a remittance. They then sent him the money that was in their hands, with which he was enabled to reach 25 Bristol, from whence he was to go to Swansea by water.

At Bristol he found an embargo laid upon the shipping, so that he could not immediately obtain a passage; and being therefore obliged to stay there some time, he with his usual felicity ingratiated himself with many 30 of the principal inhabitants, was invited to their houses, distinguished at their public feasts, and treated with a regard that gratified his vanity, and therefore easily engaged his affection.

He began very early after his retirement to complain 35 of the conduct of his friends in London, and irritated many of them so much by his letters, that they with-

drew, however honorably, their contributions; and it is believed that little more was paid him than the twenty pounds a year, which were allowed him by the gentleman who proposed the subscription.

5 After some stay at Bristol, he retired to Swansea, the place originally proposed for his residence, where he lived about a year, very much dissatisfied with the diminution of his salary; but contracted, as in other places, acquaintance with those who were most distinguished  
10 in that country, among whom he has celebrated Mr. Powell and Mrs. Jones, by some verses which he inserted in *The Gentleman's Magazine*.<sup>1</sup>

Here he completed his tragedy, of which two acts were wanting when he left London; and was desirous  
15 of coming to town, to bring it upon the stage. This design was very warmly opposed; and he was advised, by his chief benefactor, to put it into the hands of Mr. Thomson and Mr. Mallett, that it might be fitted for the stage, and to allow his friends to receive the profits,  
20 out of which an annual pension should be paid him.

This proposal he rejected with the utmost contempt. He was by no means convinced that the judgment of those, to whom he was required to submit, was superior to his own. He was now determined, as he expressed  
25 it, to be 'no longer kept in leading-strings,' and had no elevated idea of 'his bounty, who proposed to pension him out of the profits of his own labors.'

He attempted in Wales to promote a subscription for his works, and had once hopes of success; but in a short  
30 time afterwards formed a resolution of leaving that part of the country, to which he thought it not reasonable to be confined for the gratification of those who, having promised him a liberal income, had no sooner banished him to a remote corner, than they reduced his allowance  
35 to a salary scarcely equal to the necessities of life.

His resentment of this treatment, which, in his own

<sup>1</sup>Printed in the late collection.

opinion at least, he had not deserved, was such, that he broke off all correspondence with most of his contributors, and appeared to consider them as persecutors and oppressors; and, in the latter part of his life, declared, that their conduct toward him since his departure from 5 London had 'been perfidiousness improving on perfidiousness, and inhumanity on inhumanity.'

It is not to be supposed that the necessities of Mr. Savage did not sometimes incite him to satirical exaggerations of the behavior of those by whom he thought 10 himself reduced to them. But it must be granted, that the diminution of his allowance was a great hardship, and that those who withdrew their subscription from a man who, upon the faith of their promise, had gone into a kind of banishment, and abandoned all those by 15 whom he had been before relieved in his distresses, will find it no easy task to vindicate their conduct.

It may be alleged, and perhaps justly, that he was petulant and contemptuous; that he more frequently reproached his subscribers for not giving him more, than 20 thanked them for what he received; but it is to be remembered, that his conduct, and this is the worst charge that can be drawn up against him, did them no real injury, and that it therefore ought rather to have been pitied than resented; at least, the resentment it might 25 provoke ought to have been generous and manly; epithets which his conduct will hardly deserve that starves the man whom he has persuaded to put himself into his power.

It might have been reasonably demanded by Savage, 30 that they should, before they had taken away what they promised, have replaced him in his former state, that they should have taken no advantages from the situation to which the appearance of their kindness had reduced him, and that he should have been recalled to London 35 before he was abandoned. He might justly represent, that he ought to have been considered as a lion in the

toils, and demand to be released before the dogs should be loosed upon him.

He endeavored, indeed, to release himself, and, with an intent to return to London, went to Bristol, where a  
5 repetition of the kindness which he had formerly found invited him to stay. He was not only caressed and treated, but had a collection made for him of about thirty pounds, with which it had been happy if he had immediately departed for London; but his negligence did  
10 not suffer him to consider that such proofs of kindness were not often to be expected, and that this ardor of benevolence was in a great degree the effect of novelty, and might, probably, be every day less; and therefore he took no care to improve the happy time, but was  
15 encouraged by one favor to hope for another, till at length generosity was exhausted, and officiousness wearied.

Another part of his misconduct was the practice of prolonging his visits to unseasonable hours, and dis-  
20 concerting all the families into which he was admitted. This was an error in a place of commerce, which all the charms of his conversation could not compensate; for what trader would purchase such airy satisfaction by the loss of solid gain, which must be the consequence  
25 of midnight merriment, as those hours which were gained at night were generally lost in the morning?

• Thus Mr. Savage, after the curiosity of the inhabitants was gratified, found the number of his friends daily decreasing, perhaps without suspecting for what reason  
30 their conduct was altered; for he still continued to harass, with his nocturnal intrusions, those that yet countenanced him, and admitted him to their houses.

But he did not spend all the time of his residence at Bristol in visits or at taverns; for he sometimes re-  
35 turned to his studies, and began several considerable designs. When he felt an inclination to write, he always retired from the knowledge of his friends, and lay hid

in an obscure part of the suburbs, till he found himself again desirous of company, to which it is likely that intervals of absence made him more welcome.

He was always full of his design of returning to London, to bring his tragedy upon the stage; but, having 5 neglected to depart with the money that was raised for him, he could not afterwards procure a sum sufficient to defray the expenses of his journey; nor perhaps would a fresh supply have had any other effect than by putting immediate pleasures in his power, to have 10 driven the thoughts of his journey out of his mind.

While he was thus spending the day in contriving a scheme for the morrow, distress stole upon him by imperceptible degrees. His conduct had already wearied some of those who were at first enamored of his con- 15 versation; but he might, perhaps, still have devolved to others, whom he might have entertained with equal success, had not the decay of his clothes made it no longer consistent with their vanity to admit him to their tables, or to associate with him in public places. He 20 now began to find every man from home at whose house he called; and was therefore no longer able to procure the necessaries of life, but wandered about the town, slighted and neglected, in quest of a dinner, which he did not always obtain. 25

To complete his misery, he was pursued by the officers for small debts which he had contracted; and was therefore obliged to withdraw from the small number of friends from whom he had still reason to hope for favors. His custom was to lie in bed the greatest part of the 30 day, and to go out in the dark with the utmost privacy, and after having paid his visit, return again before morning to his lodging, which was in the garret of an obscure inn.

Being thus excluded on one hand, and confined on the 35 other, he suffered the utmost extremities of poverty, and often fasted so long, that he was seized with faint-

ness, and had lost his appetite, not being able to bear the smell of meat, till the action of his stomach was restored by a cordial.

In this distress, he received a remittance of five pounds 5 from London, with which he provided himself a decent coat, and determined to go to London, but unhappily spent his money at a favorite tavern. Thus was he again confined to Bristol, where he was every day hunted by bailiffs. In this exigence he once more found a 10 friend, who sheltered him in his house, though at the usual inconveniencies with which his company was attended; for he could neither be persuaded to go to bed in the night, nor to rise in the day.

It is observable that in these various scenes of misery 15 he was always disengaged and cheerful: he at some times pursued his studies, and at others continued or enlarged his epistolary correspondence; nor was he ever so far dejected as to endeavor to procure an increase of his allowance by any other methods than accusations 20 and reproaches.

He had now no longer any hopes of assistance from his friends at Bristol, who as merchants, and by consequence sufficiently studious of profit, cannot be supposed to have looked with much compassion upon negli- 25 gence and extravagance, or to think any excellence equivalent to a fault of such consequence as neglect of economy. It is natural to imagine, that many of those who would have relieved his real wants, were discouraged from the exertion of their benevolence by observation 30 of the use which was made of their favors, and conviction that relief would only be momentary, and that the same necessity would quickly return.

At last he quitted the house of his friend, and returned to his lodging at the inn, still intending to set 35 out in a few days for London; but on the 10th of January, 1742-3, having been at supper with two of his friends, he was at his return to his lodgings arrested

for a debt of about eight pounds, which he owed at a coffee-house, and conducted to the house of a sheriff's officer. The account which he gives of this misfortune, in a letter to one of the gentlemen with whom he had supped, is too remarkable to be omitted. 5

'It was not a little unfortunate for me, that I spent yesterday's evening with you; because the hour hindered me from entering on my new lodging; however, I have now got one, but such an one as I believe nobody would choose. 10

'I was arrested at the suit of Mrs. Read, just as I was going up stairs to bed, at Mr. Bowyer's; but taken in so private a manner, that I believe nobody at the White Lion is apprised of it; though I let the officers know the strength, or rather weakness, of my pocket, 15 yet they treated me with the utmost civility; and even when they conducted me to confinement, it was in such a manner, that I verily believe I could have escaped, which I would rather be ruined than have done, notwithstanding the whole amount of my finances was but 20 three-pence halfpenny.

'In the first place, I must insist, that you will industriously conceal this from Mrs. S——s, because I would not have her good-nature suffer that pain which, I know, she would be apt to feel on this occasion. 25

'Next, I conjure you, dear Sir, by all the ties of friendship, by no means to have one uneasy thought on my account; but to have the same pleasantry of countenance, and unruffled serenity of mind, which (God be praised!) I have in this, and have had in a much 30 severer calamity. Furthermore, I charge you, if you value my friendship as truly as I do yours, not to utter, or even harbor, the least resentment against Mrs. Read. I believe she has ruined me, but I freely forgive her; and (though I will never more have any intimacy with 35 her) I would, at a due distance, rather do her an act of good, than ill will. Lastly (pardon the expression),

I absolutely command you not to offer me any pecuniary assistance, nor to attempt getting me any from any one of your friends. At another time, or on any other occasion, you may, dear friend, be well assured, I would rather write to you in the submissive style of a request, than that of a peremptory command.

‘However, that my truly valuable friend may not think I am too proud to ask a favor, let me entreat you to let me have your boy to attend me for this day, not only for the sake of saving me the expense of porters, but for the delivery of some letters to people whose names I would not have known to strangers.

‘The civil treatment I have thus far met from those whose prisoner I am, makes me thankful to the Almighty, that though he has thought fit to visit me (on my birth-night) with affliction, yet (such is his great goodness!) my affliction is not without alleviating circumstances. I murmur not; but am all resignation to the divine will. As to the world, I hope that I shall be endued by Heaven with that presence of mind, that serene dignity in misfortune, that constitutes the character of a true nobleman; a dignity far beyond that of coronets; a nobility arising from the just principles of philosophy, refined and exalted by those of Christianity.’

He continued five days at the officer’s, in hopes that he should be able to procure bail, and avoid the necessity of going to prison. The state in which he passed his time, and the treatment which he received, are very justly expressed by him in a letter which he wrote to a friend: ‘The whole day,’ says he, ‘has been employed in various people’s filling my head with their foolish chimerical systems, which has obliged me coolly (as far as nature will admit) to digest, and accommodate myself to, every different person’s way of thinking; hurried from one wild system to another, till it has quite made a chaos of my imagination, and nothing done—promised—dis-



appointed—ordered to send, every hour, from one part of the town to the other.’

When his friends, who had hitherto caressed and applauded, found that to give bail and pay the debt was the same, they all refused to preserve him from a prison at the expense of eight pounds; and therefore, after having been for some time at the officer’s house ‘at an immense expense,’ as he observes in his letter, he was at length removed to Newgate.

This expense he was enabled to support by the generosity of Mr. Nash at Bath, who, upon receiving from him an account of his condition, immediately sent him five guineas, and promised to promote his subscription at Bath with all his interest.

By his removal to Newgate, he obtained at least a freedom from suspense, and rest from the disturbing vicissitudes of hope and disappointment; he now found that his friends were only companions, who were willing to share his gaiety, but not to partake of his misfortunes; and therefore he no longer expected any assistance from them.

It must, however, be observed of one gentleman, that he offered to release him by paying the debt; but that Mr. Savage would not consent, I suppose, because he thought he had before been too burdensome to him. 25

He was offered by some of his friends that a collection should be made for his enlargement; but he ‘treated the proposal,’ and declared ‘he should again treat it, with disdain. As to writing any mendicant letters he had too high a spirit, and determined only to write to some ministers of state, to try to regain his pension.’ • 30

He continued to complain<sup>2</sup> of those that had sent him into the country, and objected to them, that he had ‘lost the profits of his play, which had been finished three years’; and in another letter declares his resolution to 35

<sup>1</sup> In a letter after his confinement.

<sup>2</sup> Letter, Jan. 15.

publish a pamphlet, that the world might know how 'he had been used.'

This pamphlet was never written; for he in a very short time recovered his usual tranquillity, and cheerfully applied himself to more inoffensive studies. He indeed steadily declared, that he was promised a yearly allowance of fifty pounds, and never received half the sum; but he seemed to resign himself to that as well as to other misfortunes, and lose the remembrance of it in his amusements and employments.

The cheerfulness with which he bore his confinement appears from the following letter, which he wrote, January the 30th, to one of his friends in London.

'I now write to you from my confinement in Newgate, where I have been ever since Monday last was se'nnight, and where I enjoy myself with much more tranquillity than I have known for upwards of a twelvemonth past; having a room entirely to myself, and pursuing the amusement of my poetical studies, uninterrupted, and agreeable to my mind. I thank the Almighty, I am now all collected in myself; and, though my person is in confinement, my mind can expatiate on ample and useful subjects with all the freedom imaginable. I am now more conversant with the Nine than ever, and if, instead of a Newgate-bird, I may be allowed to be a bird of the Muses, I assure you, Sir, I sing very freely in my cage; sometimes indeed in the plaintive notes of the nightingale; but at others in the cheerful strains of the lark.'

In another letter he observes that he ranges from one subject to another, without confining himself to any particular task; and that he was employed one week upon one attempt, and the next upon another.

Surely the fortitude of this man deserves, at least, to be mentioned with applause; and, whatever faults may be imputed to him, the virtue of suffering well cannot be denied him. The two powers which, in the

opinion of Epictetus, constituted a wise man, are those of bearing and forbearing; which cannot indeed be affirmed to have been equally possessed by Savage; and indeed the want of one obliged him very frequently to practise the other. 5

He was treated by Mr. Dagge, the keeper of the prison, with great humanity; was supported by him at his own table, without any certainty of recompense; had a room to himself, to which he could at any time retire from all disturbance; was allowed to stand at the door 10 of the prison, and sometimes taken into the fields; so that he suffered fewer hardships in prison than he had been accustomed to undergo in the greatest part of his life.

The keeper did not confine his benevolence to a gentle 15 execution of his office, but made some overtures to the creditor for his release, though without effect; and continued, during the whole time of his imprisonment, to treat him with the utmost tenderness and civility. 20

Virtue is undoubtedly most laudable in that state which makes it most difficult; and therefore the humanity of a gaoler certainly deserves this public attestation; and the man whose heart has not been hardened by such an employment, may be justly proposed as 25 a pattern of benevolence. If an inscription was once engraved, 'to the honest toll-gatherer,' less honors ought not to be paid 'to the tender gaoler.'

Mr. Savage very frequently received visits, and sometimes presents, from his acquaintances; but they did 30 not amount to a subsistence, for the greater part of which he was indebted to the generosity of this keeper; but these favors, however they might endear to him the particular persons from whom he received them, were very far from impressing upon his mind any ad- 35 vantageous ideas of the people of Bristol, and therefore he thought he could not more properly employ himself

in prison, than in writing a poem called *London and Bristol delineated*.<sup>1</sup>

- When he had brought this poem to its present state, which, without considering the chasm, is not perfect, he wrote to London an account of his design, and informed his friend, that he was determined to print it with his name; but enjoined him not to communicate his intention to his Bristol acquaintance. This gentleman, surprised at his resolution, endeavored to dissuade him from publishing it, at least from prefixing his name; and declared, that he could not reconcile the injunction of secrecy with his resolution to own it at its first appearance. To this Mr. Savage returned an answer agreeable to his character, in the following terms:
- 15 'I received yours this morning; and not without a little surprise at the contents. To answer a question with a question, you ask me concerning London and Bristol, Why will I add *delineated*? Why did Mr. Wollaston add the same word to his *Religion of Nature*?
- 20 I suppose that it was his will and pleasure to add it in his case; and it is mine to do so in my own. You are pleased to tell me, that you understand not why secrecy is enjoined, and yet I intend to set my name to it. My answer is—I have my private reasons, which
- 25 I am not obliged to explain to any one. You doubt my friend Mr. S—— would not approve of it—And what is it to me whether he does or not? Do you imagine that Mr. S——is to dictate to me? If any man who calls himself my friend should assume such an air,
- 30 I would spurn at his friendship with contempt. You say, I seem to think so by not letting him know it—And suppose I do, what then? Perhaps I can give reasons for that disapprobation, very foreign from what you would imagine. You go on in saying, Suppose I
- 35 should not put my name to it—My answer is, that I

<sup>1</sup>The author preferred this title to that of *London and Bristol compared*; which, when he began the piece, he intended to prefix to it.

will not suppose any such thing, being determined to the contrary: neither, Sir, would I have you suppose, that I applied to you for want of another press: nor would I have you imagine, that I owe Mr. S—— obligations which I do not.' 5

Such was his imprudence, and such his obstinate adherence to his own resolutions, however absurd! A prisoner! supported by charity! And, whatever insults he might have received during the latter part of his stay in Bristol, once caressed, esteemed, and presented with 10 a liberal collection, he could forget on a sudden his danger and his obligations, to gratify the petulance of his wit, or the eagerness of his resentment, and publish a satire, by which he might reasonably expect that he should alienate those who then supported him, and pro- 15 voke those whom he could neither resist nor escape.

This resolution, from the execution of which it is probable that only his death could have hindered him, is sufficient to show how much he disregarded all considerations that opposed his present passions, and how 20 readily he hazarded all future advantages for any immediate gratifications. Whatever was his predominant inclination, neither hope nor fear hindered him from complying with it; nor had opposition any other effect than to heighten his ardor, and irritate his vehemence. 25

This performance was however laid aside, while he was employed in soliciting assistance from several great persons; and one interruption succeeding another, hindered him from supplying the chasm, and perhaps from retouching the other parts, which he can hardly be 30 imagined to have finished in his own opinion; for it is very unequal, and some of the lines are rather inserted to rhyme to others, than to support or improve the sense; but the first and last parts are worked up with great spirit and elegance. 35

His time was spent in the prison for the most part in study, or in receiving visits; but sometimes he de-

scended to lower amusements, and diverted himself in the kitchen with the conversation of the criminals; for it was not pleasing to him to be much without company; and, though he was very capable of a judicious choice, 5 he was often contented with the first that offered: for this he was sometimes reproved by his friends, who found him surrounded with felons; but the reproof was on that, as on other occasions, thrown away; he continued to gratify himself, and to set very little value 10 on the opinion of others.

But here, as in every other scene of his life, he made use of such opportunities as occurred of benefiting those who were more miserable than himself, and was always ready to perform any office of humanity to his fellow- 15 prisoners.

He had now ceased from corresponding with any of his subscribers except one, who yet continued to remit him the twenty pounds a year which he had promised him, and by whom it was expected that he would have 20 been in a very short time enlarged, because he had directed the keeper to inquire after the state of his debts.

However, he took care to enter his name according to the forms of the court, that the creditor might be 25 obliged to make him some allowance, if he was continued a prisoner, and, when on that occasion he appeared in the hall, was treated with very unusual respect.

But the resentment of the city was afterwards raised 30 by some accounts that had been spread of the satire; and he was informed that some of the merchants intended to pay the allowance which the law required, and to detain him a prisoner at their own expense. This he treated as an empty menace; and perhaps might 35 have hastened the publication, only to show how much he was superior to their insults, had not all his schemes been suddenly destroyed.

When he had been six months in prison, he received from one of his friends, in whose kindness he had the greatest confidence, and on whose assistance he chiefly depended, a letter, that contained a charge of very atrocious ingratitude, drawn up in such terms as sudden 5 resentment dictated. Henley, in one of his advertisements, had mentioned 'Pope's treatment of Savage.' This was supposed by Pope to be the consequence of a complaint made by Savage to Henley, and was therefore mentioned by him with much resentment. Mr. 10 Savage returned a very solemn protestation of his innocence, but however appeared much disturbed at the accusation. Some days afterwards he was seized with a pain in his back and side, which, as it was not violent, was not suspected to be dangerous; but growing daily 15 more languid and dejected, on the 25th of July he confined himself to his room, and a fever seized his spirits. The symptoms grew every day more formidable, but his condition did not enable him to procure any assistance. The last time that the keeper saw him was 20 on July the 31st, 1743; when Savage, seeing him at his bedside, said, with an uncommon earnestness, 'I have something to say to you, Sir'; but, after a pause, moved his hand in a melancholy manner; and, finding himself unable to recollect what he was going to com- 25 municate, said, "'Tis gone!' The keeper soon after left him; and the next morning he died. He was buried in the churchyard of St. Peter, at the expense of the keeper.

Such were the life and death of Richard Savage, a 30 man equally distinguished by his virtues and vices; and at once remarkable for his weaknesses and abilities..

He was of a middle stature, of a thin habit of body, a long visage, coarse features, and melancholy aspect; of a grave and manly deportment, a solemn dignity 35 of mien, but which, upon a nearer acquaintance, softened into an engaging easiness of manners. His walk

was slow, and his voice tremulous and mournful. He was easily excited to smiles, but very seldom provoked to laughter.

His mind was in an uncommon degree vigorous and 5 active. His judgment was accurate, his apprehension quick, and his memory so tenacious, that he was frequently observed to know what he had learned from others in a short time better than those by whom he was informed; and could frequently recollect incidents, 10 with all their combination of circumstances, which few would have regarded at the present time, but which the quickness of his apprehension impressed upon him. He had the peculiar felicity, that his attention never deserted him; he was present to every object, and re- 15 gardful of the most trifling occurrences. He had the art of escaping from his own reflections, and accommodating himself to every new scene.

To this quality is to be imputed the extent of his knowledge, compared with the small time which he 20 spent in visible endeavors to acquire it. He mingled in cursory conversation with the same steadiness of attention as others apply to a lecture; and, amidst the appearance of thoughtless gaiety, lost no new idea that was started, nor any hint that could be improved. 25 He had therefore made in coffee-houses the same proficiency as others in their closets: and it is remarkable that the writings of a man of little education and little reading have an air of learning scarcely to be found in any other performances, but which perhaps as often 30 obscures as embellishes them.

His judgment was eminently exact both with regard to writings and to men. The knowledge of life was indeed his chief attainment; and it is not without some satisfaction, that I can produce the suffrage of Savage 35 in favor of human nature, of which he never appeared to entertain such odious ideas as some, who perhaps had neither his judgment nor experience, have pub-



lished, either in ostentation of their sagacity, vindication of their crimes, or gratification of their malice.

His method of life particularly qualified him for conversation, of which he knew how to practise all the graces. He was never vehement or loud, but at once 5 modest and easy, open and respectful; his language was vivacious and elegant, and equally happy upon grave or humorous subjects. He was generally censured for not knowing when to retire; but that was not the defect of his judgment, but of his fortune: when he left 10 his company, he was frequently to spend the remaining part of the night in the street, or at least was abandoned to gloomy reflections, which it is not strange that he delayed as long as he could; and sometimes forgot that he gave others pain to avoid it himself. 15

It cannot be said that he made use of his abilities for the direction of his own conduct: an irregular and dissipated manner of life had made him the slave of every passion that happened to be excited by the presence of its object, and that slavery to his passions 20 reciprocally produced a life irregular and dissipated. He was not master of his own motions, nor could promise any thing for the next day.

With regard to his economy, nothing can be added to the relation of his life. He appeared to think himself 25 born to be supported by others, and dispensed from all necessity of providing for himself; he therefore never prosecuted any scheme of advantage, nor endeavored even to secure the profits which his writings might have afforded him. His temper was, in consequence of the 30 dominion of his passions, uncertain and capricious; he was easily engaged and easily disgusted; but he is accused of retaining his hatred more tenaciously than his benevolence.

He was compassionate both by nature and principle, 35 and always ready to perform offices of humanity; but when he was provoked (and very small offenses were

sufficient to provoke him), he would prosecute his revenge with the utmost acrimony till his passion had subsided.

His friendship was therefore of little value; for, though he was zealous in the support or vindication of those whom he loved, yet it was always dangerous to trust him, because he considered himself as discharged by the first quarrel from all ties of honor or gratitude; and would betray those secrets which, in the warmth of confidence, had been imparted to him. This practice drew upon him an universal accusation of ingratitude: nor can it be denied that he was very ready to set himself free from the load of an obligation; for he could not bear to conceive himself in a state of dependence, his pride being equally powerful with his other passions, and appearing in the form of insolence at one time, and of vanity at another. Vanity, the most innocent species of pride, was most frequently predominant: he could not easily leave off, when he had once begun to mention himself or his works; nor ever read his verses without stealing his eyes from the page, to discover, in the faces of his audience, how they were affected with any favorite passage.

A kinder name than that of vanity ought to be given to the delicacy with which he was always careful to separate his own merit from every other man's and to reject that praise to which he had no claim. He did not forget, in mentioning his performances, to mark every line that had been suggested or amended; and was so accurate, as to relate that he owed *three words* in *The Wanderer* to the advice of friends.

His veracity was questioned, but with little reason; his accounts, though not indeed always the same, were generally consistent. When he loved any man, he suppressed all his faults; and, when he had been offended by him, concealed all his virtues; but his characters were generally true, so far as he proceeded; though it

cannot be denied, that his partiality might have sometimes the effect of falsehood.

In cases indifferent, he was zealous for virtue, truth, and justice: he knew very well the necessity of goodness to the present and future happiness of mankind; 5 nor is there perhaps any writer, who has less endeavored to please by flattering the appetites, or perverting the judgment.

As an author, therefore (and he now ceases to influence mankind in any other character) if one piece 10 which he had resolved to suppress be excepted, he has very little to fear from the strictest moral or religious censure. And though he may not be altogether secure against the objections of the critic, it must however be acknowledged, that his works are the productions of 15 a genius truly poetical; and what many writers who have been more lavishly applauded cannot boast, that they have an original air, which has no resemblance of any foregoing work, that the versification and sentiments have a cast peculiar to themselves, which no 20 man can imitate with success, because what was nature in Savage would in another be affectation. It must be confessed, that his descriptions are striking, his images animated, his fictions justly imagined, and his allegories artfully pursued; that his diction is elevated, 25 though sometimes forced, and his numbers sonorous and majestic, though frequently sluggish and encumbered. Of his style, the general fault is harshness, and its general excellence is dignity; of his sentiments, the prevailing beauty is simplicity, and uniformity the pre- 30 vailing defect.

For his life, or for his writings, none who candidly consider his fortune will think an apology either necessary or difficult. If he was not always sufficiently 35 instructed in his subject, his knowledge was at least greater than could have been attained by others in the same state. If his works were sometimes unfinished,

accuracy cannot reasonably be exacted from a man oppressed with want, which he has no hope of relieving but by a speedy publication. The insolence and resentment of which he is accused, were not easily to be avoided by a great mind, irritated by perpetual hardships, and constrained hourly to return the spurns of contempt, and repress the insolence of prosperity; and vanity surely may be readily pardoned in him, to whom life afforded no other comforts than barren praises, and the consciousness of deserving them.

Those are no proper judges of his conduct who have slumbered away their time on the down of plenty; nor will any wise man presume to say, 'Had I been in Savage's condition, I should have lived or written better than Savage.'

This relation will not be wholly without its use, if those, who languish under any part of his sufferings, shall be enabled to fortify their patience, by reflecting that they feel only those afflictions from which the abilities of Savage did not exempt him; or if those who, in confidence of superior capacities or attainments, disregard the common maxims of life, shall be reminded, that nothing will supply the want of prudence, and that negligence and irregularity, long continued, will make knowledge useless, wit ridiculous, and genius contemptible.

## PREFATORY NOTE ON *THE LIFE OF ADDISON*,

'I am engaged to write little Lives, and little Prefaces, to a little edition of *The English Poets*,' wrote Johnson to Boswell in 1777. But at publication, nearly two years later, he said: 'I have been led beyond my intention, I hope, by the honest desire of giving useful pleasure' (*Lives* 1. xxvi). Many of the biographical prefaces remained 'little,' but of the fifty-one *Lives*, some fourteen reached a considerable length. Among these were the lives of Cowley, Milton, Waller, Dryden, Addison, Prior, Congreve, Swift, Pope (the longest), Thomson, Young, and Gray.

*The English Poets* was published coöperatively by some forty London booksellers. When approached by their committee, and requested to name his price for the work, Johnson asked but two hundred guineas, and to this the publishers afterwards added £100. 'Had he asked one thousand,' said Malone, 'or even fifteen hundred guineas, the booksellers, who knew the value of his name, would doubtless have readily given it. They have probably got five thousand guineas by this work in the course of twenty-five years' (*Life* 3. 111, n. 1).

Four volumes saw the light in 1779, but the remaining six not until 1781. 'Some time in March,' wrote Johnson, 'I finished the *Lives of the Poets*, which I wrote in my usual way, dilatorily and hastily, unwilling to work, and working with vigor and haste' (*Life* 4. 34).

Johnson expected to be attacked for his opinions. He said, 'I would rather be attacked than unnoticed'; and he had his preference. Especial fault was found with the lives of Milton, Gray, and Littleton; but he said: 'Sir, I considered myself as intrusted with a certain portion of truth; I have given my opinion sincerely; let them show where they think me wrong' (*Life* 3. 65). But praise was

louder than blame: 'I know not that I have written anything more generally commended than the *Lives of the Poets*.' Of all his literary work the *Lives* are the most mature, spontaneous, and vigorous, and the *Life of Addison* represents these qualities perhaps the best of any, together with a completeness of form not attained by any of the others.

## The Life of Addison

JOSEPH ADDISON was born on the 1st of May, 1672, at Milston, of which his father, Lancelot Addison, was then rector, near Ambrosebury, in Wiltshire, and appearing weak and unlikely to live, he was christened the same day. After the usual domestic education, 5 which from the character of the father may be reasonably supposed to have given him strong impressions of piety, he was committed to the care of Mr. Naish, at Ambrosebury, and afterwards of Mr. Taylor, at Salisbury. 10

Not to name the school or the masters of men illustrious for literature, is a kind of historical fraud, by which honest fame is injuriously diminished: I would therefore trace him through the whole process of his education. In 1683, in the beginning of his twelfth 15 year, his father, being made dean of Lichfield, naturally carried his family to his new residence, and, I believe, placed him for some time, probably not long, under Mr. Shaw, then master of the school at Lichfield, father of the late Dr. Peter Shaw. Of this interval his biogra- 20 phers have given no account, and I know it only from a story of a *barring-out*, told me, when I was a boy, by Andrew Corbet, of Shropshire, who had heard it from Mr. Pigot, his uncle.

The practice of *barring-out* was a savage licence, 25 practised in many schools to the end of the last century, by which the boys, when the periodical vacation drew near, growing petulant at the approach of liberty, some days before the time of regular recess, took possession of the school, of which they barred the doors, and 30

bade their master defiance from the windows. It is not easy to suppose that on such occasions the master would do more than laugh; yet, if tradition may be credited, he often struggled hard to force or surprise the garrison. The master, when Pigot was a school-boy, was *barred-out* at Lichfield; and the whole operation, as he said, was planned and conducted by Addison.

To judge better of the probability of this story, I have inquired when he was sent to the Chartreux; but, as he was not one of those who enjoyed the Founder's benefaction, there is no account preserved of his admission. At the school of the Chartreux, to which he was removed either from that of Salisbury or Lichfield, he pursued his juvenile studies under the care of Dr. Ellis, and contracted that intimacy with Sir Richard Steele, which their joint labors have so effectually recorded.

Of this memorable friendship the greater praise must be given to Steele. It is not hard to love those from whom nothing can be feared; and Addison never considered Steele as a rival; but Steele lived, as he confesses, under an habitual subjection to the predominating genius of Addison, whom he always mentioned with reverence, and treated with obsequiousness.

Addison, who knew his own dignity, could not always forbear to show it, by playing a little upon his admirer; but he was in no danger of retort: his jests were endured without resistance or resentment.

But the sneer of jocularitv was not the worst. Steele, whose imprudence of generosity, or vanity of profusion, kept him always incurably necessitous, upon some pressing exigence, in an evil hour, borrowed an hundred pounds of his friend, probably without much purpose of repayment; but Addison, who seems to have had other notions of a hundred pounds, grew impatient of delay, and reclaimed his loan by an execution. Steele felt



with great sensibility the obduracy of his creditor, but with emotions of sorrow rather than of anger.

In 1687 he was entered into Queen's College in Oxford, where, in 1689, the accidental perusal of some Latin verses gained him the patronage of Dr. Lancaster, afterwards provost of Queen's College; by whose recommendation he was elected into Magdalen College as a demy, a term by which that society denominates those which are elsewhere called scholars; young men, who partake of the founder's benefaction, and succeed in their order to vacant fellowships.

Here he continued to cultivate poetry and criticism, and grew first eminent by his Latin compositions, which are indeed entitled to particular praise. He has not confined himself to the imitation of any ancient author, but has formed his style from the general language, such as a diligent perusal of the productions of different ages happened to supply.

His Latin compositions seem to have had much of his fondness, for he collected a second volume of the *Musæ Anglicanæ*, perhaps for a convenient receptacle, in which all his Latin pieces are inserted, and where his Poem on the Peace has the first place. He afterwards presented the collection to Boileau, who, from that time, 'conceived,' says Tickell, 'an opinion of the English genius for poetry.' Nothing is better known of Boileau, than that he had an injudicious and peevish contempt of modern Latin, and therefore his profession of regard was probably the effect of his civility rather than approbation.

30

Three of his Latin poems are upon subjects on which perhaps he would not have ventured to have written in his own language. *The Battle of the Pigmies and Cranes; The Barometer; and A Bowling-green*. When the matter is low or scanty, a dead language, in which nothing is mean because nothing is familiar, affords great conveniencies; and, by the sonorous magnificence

of Roman syllables, the writer conceals penury of thought and want of novelty, often from the reader, and often from himself.

In his twenty-second year he first showed his power of English poetry by some verses addressed to Dryden; and soon afterwards published a translation of the greater part of the *Fourth Georgic* upon Bees; after which, says Dryden, 'my latter swarm is hardly worth the hiving.'

10 About the same time he composed the arguments prefixed to the several books of Dryden's *Virgil*; and produced an *Essay on the Georgics*, juvenile, superficial, and uninteresting, without much either of the scholar's learning or the critic's penetration.

15 His next paper of verses contained a character of the principal English poets, inscribed to Henry Sacheverell, who was then, if not a poet, a writer of verses; as is shown by his version of a small part of Virgil's *Georgics*, published in the *Miscellanies*; and a Latin  
20 encomium on Queen Mary, in the *Musæ Anglicanæ*. These verses exhibit all the fondness of friendship; but, on one side or the other, friendship was afterwards too weak for the malignity of faction.

In this poem is a very confident and discriminative  
25 character of Spenser, whose work he had then never read. So little sometimes is criticism the effect of judgment. It is necessary to inform the reader, that about this time he was introduced by Congreve to Montague, then Chancellor of the Exchequer. Addison was then  
30 learning the trade of a courtier, and subjoined Montague, as a poetical name, to those of Cowley and of Dryden.

By the influence of Mr. Montague, concurring, according to Tickell, with his natural modesty, he was  
35 diverted from his original design of entering into holy orders. Montague alleged the corruption of men who engaged in civil employments without liberal education;

and declared, that, though he was represented as an enemy to the church, he would never do it any injury but by withholding Addison from it.

Soon after (in 1695) he wrote a poem to King William, with a rhyming introduction, addressed to Lord 5 Somers. King William had no regard to elegance or literature; his study was only war; yet by a choice of ministers whose disposition was very different from his own, he procured, without intention, a very liberal patronage to poetry. Addison was caressed both by Somers 10 and Montague.

In 1697 appeared his Latin verses on the Peace of Ryswick, which he dedicated to Montague, and which was afterwards called by Smith, 'the best Latin poem since the *Æneid*.' Praise must not be too rigorously 15 examined; but the performance cannot be denied to be vigorous and elegant.

Having yet no public employment, he obtained (in 1699) a pension of three hundred pounds a year, that he might be enabled to travel. He staid a year at 20 Blois, probably to learn the French language; and then proceeded in his journey to Italy, which he surveyed with the eyes of a poet.

While he was travelling at leisure, he was far from being idle; for he not only collected his observations 25 on the country, but found time to write his *Dialogues on Medals*, and four acts of *Cato*. Such at least is the relation of Tickell. Perhaps he only collected his materials, and formed his plan.

Whatever were his other employments in Italy, he 30 there wrote the letter to lord Halifax, which is justly considered as the most elegant, if not the most sublime, of his poetical productions. But in about two years he found it necessary to hasten home; being, as Swift informs us, distressed by indigence, and compelled to 35 become the tutor of a travelling squire, because his pension was not remitted.



Johnson in 1770, by Reynolds. He is shown without a wig, and with his hands raised in a characteristic gesture. This portrait expresses, more than any other, the pathos and tragedy of his life. The original or a copy was presented to his stepdaughter, Miss Porter, of Lichfield, whence Johnson writes in 1771 to thank Reynolds, and to say that it had been 'much visited and much admired. Every man has a lurking wish to appear considerable in his native place.'



At his return he published his *Travels*, with a dedication to lord Somers. As his stay in foreign countries was short, his observations are such as might be supplied by a hasty view, and consist chiefly in comparisons of the present face of the country with the descriptions left us by the Roman poets, from whom he made preparatory collections, though he might have spared the trouble, had he known that such collections had been made twice before by Italian authors.

10 The most amusing passage of his book, is his account of the minute republic of San Marino: of many parts it is not a very severe censure to say, that they might have been written at home. His elegance of language, and variegation of prose and verse, however, gain upon  
15 the reader; and the book, though a while neglected, became in time so much the favorite of the public, that before it was reprinted, it rose to five times its price.

When he returned to England (in 1702), with a  
20 meanness of appearance which gave testimony of the difficulties to which he had been reduced, he found his old patrons out of power, and was therefore, for a time, at full leisure for the cultivation of his mind; and a mind so cultivated gives reason to believe that  
25 little time was lost.

But he remained not long neglected or useless. The victory at Blenheim (1704) spread triumph and confidence over the nation; and lord Godolphin, lamenting to lord Halifax, that it had not been celebrated in a  
30 manner equal to the subject, desired him to propose it to some better poet. Halifax told him, that there was no encouragement for genius; that worthless men were unprofitably enriched with public money, without any care to find or employ those whose appearance might  
35 do honor to their country. To this Godolphin replied, that such abuses should in time be rectified; and that, if a man could be found capable of the task then pro-

posed, he should not want an ample recompense. Halifax then named Addison; but required that the treasurer should apply to him in his own person. Godolphin sent the message by Mr. Boyle, afterwards Lord Carleton: and Addison, having undertaken the work, communicated it to the Treasurer, while it was yet advanced no farther than the simile of the Angel, and was immediately rewarded by succeeding Mr. Locke in the place of Commissioner of Appeals.

In the following year he was at Hanover with Lord 10  
Halifax: and the year after was made Under-secretary of State, first to Sir Charles Hedges, and in a few months more to the Earl of Sunderland.

About this time the prevalent taste for Italian operas inclined him to try what would be the effect of a 15  
musical drama in our own language. He therefore wrote the opera of *Rosamond*, which, when exhibited on the stage, was either hissed or neglected; but trusting that the readers would do him more justice, he published it, with an inscription to the Duchess of Marlborough; 20  
a woman without skill, or pretensions to skill, in poetry or literature. His dedication was therefore an instance of servile absurdity, to be exceeded only by Joshua Barnes's dedication of a Greek *Anacreon* to the duke.

25

His reputation had been somewhat advanced by *The Tender Husband*, a comedy which Steele dedicated to him, with a confession that he owed to him several of the most successful scenes. To this play Addison supplied a prologue.

30

When the Marquis of Wharton was appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Addison attended him as his secretary; and was made keeper of the records in Birmingham's Tower, with a salary of three hundred pounds a year. The office was little more than nominal, 35  
and the salary was augmented for his accommodation.

Interest and faction allow little to the operation of particular dispositions, or private opinions. Two men of personal characters more opposite than those of Wharton and Addison could not easily be brought together. 5 Wharton was impious, profligate, and shameless, without regard, or appearance of regard, to right and wrong: whatever is contrary to this may be said of Addison; but as agents of a party they were connected, and how they adjusted their other sentiments we cannot 10 know.

Addison must, however, not be too hastily condemned. It is not necessary to refuse benefits from a bad man, when the acceptance implies no approbation of his crimes; nor has the subordinate officer any obligation 15 to examine the opinions or conduct of those under whom he acts, except that he may not be made the instrument of wickedness. It is reasonable to suppose that Addison counteracted as far as he was able, the malignant and blasting influence of the lieutenant; and 20 that at least by his intervention some good was done, and some mischief prevented.

When he was in office, he made a law to himself, as Swift has recorded, never to remit his regular fees in civility to his friends: 'for,' said he, 'I may have 25 a hundred friends; and if my fee be two guineas, I shall, by relinquishing my right lose two hundred guineas, and no friend gain more than two; there is therefore no proportion between the good imparted and the evil suffered.'

30 He was in Ireland when Steele, without any communication of his design, began the publication of *The Tatler*; but he was not long concealed: by inserting a remark on Virgil, which Addison had given him, he discovered himself. It is indeed not easy for any man 35 to write upon literature, or common life, so as not to make himself known to those with whom he familiarly converses, and who are acquainted with his track of



study, his favorite topics, his peculiar notions, and his habitual phrases.

If Steele desired to write in secret, he was not lucky; a single month detected him. His first *Tatler* was published April 22 (1709); and Addison's contribution appeared May 26. Tickell observes, that *The Tatler* began and was concluded without his concurrence. This is doubtless literally true; but the work did not suffer much by his unconsciousness of its commencement, or his absence at its cessation; for he continued his assistance to December 23, and the paper stopped on January 2, 1710-11. He did not distinguish his pieces by any signature; and I know not whether his name was not kept secret till the papers were collected into volumes. 15

To *The Tatler*, in about two months succeeded *The Spectator*; a series of essays of the same kind, but written with less levity, upon a more regular plan, and published daily. Such an undertaking showed the writers not to distrust their own copiousness of materials or facility of composition, and their performance justified their confidence. They found, however, in their progress, many auxiliaries. To attempt a single paper was no terrifying labor: many pieces were offered, and many were received. 25

Addison had enough of the zeal of party; but Steele had at that time almost nothing else. *The Spectator*, in one of the first papers, showed the political tenets of its authors; but a resolution was soon taken, of courting general approbation by general topics, and subjects on which faction had produced no diversity of sentiments; such as literature, morality, and familiar life. To this practice they adhered with few deviations. The ardor of Steele once broke out in praise of Marlborough; and when Dr. Fleetwood prefixed to some sermons a preface, overflowing with Whiggish opinions, that it might be read by the queen, it was reprinted in *The Spectator*. 35

To teach the minuter decencies and inferior duties, to regulate the practice of daily conversation, to correct those depravities which are rather ridiculous than criminal, and remove those grievances which, if they produce  
5 no lasting calamities, impress hourly vexation, was first attempted by Casa in his book of *Manners*, and Castiglione in his *Courtier*; two books yet celebrated in Italy for purity and elegance, and which, if they are now less read, are neglected only because they have  
10 effected that reformation which their authors intended, and their precepts now are no longer wanted. Their usefulness to the age in which they were written is sufficiently attested by the translations which almost all the nations of Europe were in haste to obtain.

15 This species of instruction was continued, and perhaps advanced, by the French; among whom La Bruyère's *Manners of the Age*, though, as Boileau remarked, it is written without connection, certainly deserves great praise, for liveliness of description, and justness of  
20 observation.

Before *The Tatler* and *Spectator*, if the writers for the theatre are excepted, England had no masters of common life. No writers had yet undertaken to reform either the savageness of neglect, or the impertinence of  
25 civility; to show when to speak, or to be silent; how to refuse, or how to comply. We had many books to teach us our more important duties, and to settle opinions in philosophy or politics; but an *Arbiter elegantiarum*, a judge of propriety, was yet wanting,  
30 who should survey the track of daily conversation, and free it from thorns and prickles, which tease the passer, though they do not wound him.

For this purpose nothing is so proper as the frequent publication of short papers, which we read not as study  
85 but amusement. If the subject be slight, the treatise likewise is short. The busy may find time, and the idle may find patience.

This mode of conveying cheap and easy knowledge began among us in the Civil War, when it was much the interest of either party to raise and fix the prejudices of the people. At that time appeared *Mercurius Aulicus*, *Mercurius Rusticus*, and *Mercurius Civicus*. It is said, that when any title grew popular, it was stolen by the antagonist, who by this stratagem conveyed his notions to those who would not have received him, had he not worn the appearance of a friend. The tumult of those unhappy days left scarcely any man leisure 10 to treasure up occasional compositions; and so much were they neglected, that a complete collection is no where to be found.

These Mercuries were succeeded by L'Estrange's *Observer*; and that by Lesley's *Rehearsal*, and perhaps 15 by others; but hitherto nothing had been conveyed to the people, in this commodious manner, but controversy relating to the church or state; of which they taught many to talk, whom they could not teach to judge. 20

It has been suggested that the Royal Society was instituted soon after the Restoration, to divert the attention of the people from public discontent. *The Tatler* and *Spectator* had the same tendency; they were published at a time when two parties, loud, restless, and 25 violent, each with plausible declarations, and each perhaps without any distinct termination of its views, were agitating the nation; to minds heated with political contest they supplied cooler and more inoffensive reflections; and it is said by Addison, in a subsequent work, 30 that they had a perceptible influence upon the conversation of that time, and taught the frolic and the gay to unite merriment with decency; an effect which they can never wholly lose, while they continue to be among the first books by which both sexes are initiated in the 35 elegancies of knowledge.

*The Tatler* and *Spectator* adjusted, like Casa, the un-

settled practice of daily intercourse by propriety and politeness; and, like La Bruyère, exhibited the characters and manners of the age. The personages introduced in these papers were not merely ideal; they were 5 then known and conspicuous in various stations. Of *The Tatler* this is told by Steele in his last paper; and of *The Spectator* by Budgell, in the preface to *Theophrastus*, a book which Addison has recommended, and which he was suspected to have revised; if he did 10 not write it. Of those portraits, which may be supposed to be sometimes embellished, and sometimes aggravated, the originals are now partly known, and partly forgotten.

But to say that they united the plans of two or three 15 eminent writers, is to give them but a small part of their due praise; they superadded literature and criticism, and sometimes towered far above their predecessors; and taught, with great justness of argument and dignity of language, the most important duties and sub- 20 lime truths.

All these topics were happily varied with elegant fictions and refined allegories, and illuminated with different changes of style and felicities of invention.

It is recorded by Budgell, that of the characters 25 feigned or exhibited in *The Spectator*, the favorite of Addison was Sir Roger de Coverley, of whom he had formed a very delicate and discriminated idea, which he would not suffer to be violated; and therefore, when Steele had shown him innocently picking up a girl in 30 the Temple, and taking her to a tavern, he drew upon himself so much of his friend's indignation, that he was forced to appease him by a promise of forbearing Sir Roger for the time to come.

The reason which induced Cervantes to bring his hero 35 to the grave, 'para mi sola nacio Don Quixote, y yo para el,' made Addison declare, with an undue vehemence of expression, that he would kill Sir Roger;

being of opinion that they were born for one another, and that any other hand would do him wrong.

It may be doubted whether Addison ever filled up his original delineation. He describes his knight as having his imagination somewhat warped; but of this 5 perversion he has made very little use. The irregularities in Sir Roger's conduct seem not so much the effects of a mind deviating from the beaten track of life, by the perpetual pressure of some overwhelming idea, as of habitual rusticity, and that negligence which solitary 10 grandeur naturally generates.

The variable weather of the mind, the flying vapors of incipient madness, which from time to time cloud reason, without eclipsing it, it requires so much nicety to exhibit, that Addison seems to have been deterred 15 from prosecuting his own design.

To Sir Roger, who, as a country gentleman, appears to be a Tory, or, as it is gently expressed, an adherent to the landed interest, is opposed Sir Andrew Freeport, a new man, a wealthy merchant, zealous for the monied 20 interest, and a Whig. Of this contrariety of opinions, it is probable more consequences were at first intended, than could be produced when the resolution was taken to exclude party from the paper. Sir Andrew does but little, and that little seems not to have pleased Addison, 25 who, when he dismissed him from the club, changed his opinions. Steele had made him, in the true spirit of unfeeling commerce, declare that he 'would not build an hospital for idle people'; but at last he buys land, settles in the country, and builds not a manufactory, 30 but an hospital for twelve old husbandmen, for men with whom a merchant has little acquaintance, and whom he commonly considers with little kindness.

Of essays thus elegant, thus instructive, and thus commodiously distributed, it is natural to suppose the ap- 35 probation general, and the sale numerous. I once heard it observed, that the sale may be calculated by the

product of the tax, related in the last number to produce more than twenty pounds a week, and therefore stated at one-and-twenty pounds, or three pounds ten shillings a day: this, at a halfpenny a paper, will give 5 sixteen hundred and eighty for the daily number.

This sale is not great; yet this, if Swift be credited, was likely to grow less; for he declares that The Spectator, whom he ridicules for his endless mention of the *fair sex*, had before his recess wearied 10 his readers.

The next year (1713), in which *Cato* came upon the stage, was the grand climacteric of Addison's reputation. Upon the death of Cato, he had, as is said, planned a tragedy in the time of his travels, and had 15 for several years the four first acts finished, which were shown to such as were likely to spread their admiration. They were seen by Pope, and by Cibber, who relates that Steele, when he took back the copy, told him, in the despicable cant of literary modesty, that, whatever 20 spirit his friend had shown in the composition, he doubted whether he would have courage sufficient to expose it to the censure of a British audience.

The time however was now come, when those who affected to think liberty in danger affected likewise to 25 think that a stage-play might preserve it; and Addison was importuned in the name of the tutelary deities of Britain, to show his courage and his zeal by finishing his design.

To resume his work he seemed perversely and un- 30 accountably unwilling; and, by a request, which perhaps he wished to be denied, desired Mr. Hughes to add a fifth act. Hughes supposed him serious; and, undertaking the supplement, brought in a few days some scenes for his examination; but he had in the mean- 85 time gone to work himself, and produced half an act, which he afterwards completed, but with brevity irregularly disproportionate to the foregoing parts, like

a task performed with reluctance, and hurried to its conclusion.

It may yet be doubted whether *Cato* was made public by any change of the author's purpose; for Dennis charged him with raising prejudices in his own favor 5 by false positions of preparatory criticism, and with 'poisoning the town' by contradicting in *The Spectator* the established rule of poetical justice, because his own hero, with all his virtues, was to fall before a tyrant. The fact is certain; the motives we must guess. 10

Addison, was, I believe, sufficiently disposed to bar all avenues against all danger. When Pope brought him the prologue, which is properly accommodated to the play, there were these words, 'Britons, arise, be worth like this approved'; meaning nothing more than, 15 Britons, erect and exalt yourselves to the approbation of public virtue. Addison was frightened lest he should be thought a promoter of insurrection, and the line was liquidated to 'Britons, attend.'

Now 'heavily in clouds came on the day, the great, 20 the important day,' when Addison was to stand the hazard of the theatre. That there might, however, be left as little to hazard as was possible, on the first night Steele, as himself relates, undertook to pack an audience. This, says Pope, had been tried for the first 25 time in favor of *The Distressed Mother*; and was now, with more efficacy, practised for *Cato*.

The danger was soon over. The whole nation was at that time on fire with faction. The Whigs applauded every line in which liberty was mentioned, as a satire 30 on the Tories; and the Tories echoed every clap, to show that the satire was unfelt. The story of Bolingbroke is well known. He called Booth to his box, and gave him fifty guineas for defending the cause of liberty so well against a perpetual dictator. The Whigs, 35 says Pope, design a second present, when they can accompany it with as good a sentence.

The play, supported thus by the emulation of factious praise, was acted night after night for a longer time than, I believe, the public had allowed to any drama before; and the author, as Mrs. Porter long afterwards related, wandered through the whole exhibition behind the scenes with restless and unappeasable solicitude.

When it was printed, notice was given that the queen would be pleased if it was dedicated to her; 'but, as he had designed that compliment elsewhere, he found himself obliged,' says Tickell, 'by his duty on the one hand, and his honor on the other, to send it into the world without any dedication.'

Human happiness has always its abatements; the brightest sunshine of success is not without a cloud. No sooner was *Cato* offered to the reader, than it was attacked by the acute malignity of Dennis, with all the violence of angry criticism. Dennis, though equally zealous, and probably by his temper more furious than Addison, for what they called liberty, and though a flatterer of the Whig ministry, could not sit quiet at a successful play; but was eager to tell friends and enemies, that they had misplaced their admirations. The world was too stubborn for instruction; with the fate of the censurer of Corneille's *Cid*, his animadversions showed his anger without effect, and *Cato* continued to be praised.

Pope had now an opportunity of courting the friendship of Addison, by vilifying his old enemy, and could give resentment its full play without appearing to revenge himself. He therefore published *A Narrative of the Madness of John Dennis*: a performance which left the objections to the play in their full force, and therefore discovered more desire of vexing the critic than of defending the poet.

Addison, who was no stranger to the world, probably saw the selfishness of Pope's friendship; and, resolving



that he should have the consequences of his officiousness to himself, informed Dennis by Steele, that he was sorry for the insult; and that, whenever he should think fit to answer his remarks, he would do it in a manner to which nothing could be objected. 5

The greatest weakness of the play is in the scenes of love, which are said by Pope to have been added to the original plan upon a subsequent review, in compliance with the popular practice of the stage. Such an authority it is hard to reject; yet the love is so 10 intimately mingled with the whole action, that it cannot easily be thought extrinsic and adventitious; for, if it were taken away, what would be left? Or how were the four acts filled in the first draught?

At the publication the wits seemed proud to pay 15 their attendance with encomiastic verses. The best are from an unknown hand, which will perhaps lose somewhat of their praise when the author is known to be Jeffreys.

*Cato* had yet other honors. It was censured as a 20 party-play by 'A Scholar of Oxford'; and defended in a favorable examination by Dr. Sewell. It was translated by Salvini into Italian, and acted at Florence; and by the Jesuits of St. Omer's into Latin, and played by their pupils. Of this version a copy was sent to 25 Mr. Addison: it is to be wished that it could be found, for the sake of comparing their version of the soliloquy with that of Bland.

A tragedy was written on the same subject by Des Champs, a French poet, which was translated with a 30 criticism on the English play. But the translator and the critic are now forgotten.

Dennis lived on unanswered, and therefore little read. Addison knew the policy of literature too well to make his enemy important by drawing the attention of the 35 public upon a criticism, which, though sometimes intemperate, was often irrefragable.

While *Cato* was upon the stage, another daily paper called *The Guardian*, was published by Steele. To this Addison gave great assistance, whether occasionally or by previous engagement is not known.

5 The character of *Guardian* was too narrow and too serious: it might properly enough admit both the duties and the decencies of life, but seemed not to include literary speculations, and was in some degree violated by merriment and burlesque. What had the *Guardian*  
10 of the Lizards to do with clubs of tall or of little men, with nests of ants, or with Strada's prolusions?

Of this paper nothing is necessary to be said, but that it found many contributors, and that it was a continuation of *The Spectator*, with the same elegance,  
15 and the same variety, till some unlucky sparkle from a Tory paper set Steele's politics on fire, and wit at once blazed into faction. He was soon too hot for neutral topics, and quitted *The Guardian* to write *The Englishman*.

20 The papers of Addison are marked in *The Spectator* by one of the letters in the name of Clio, and in *The Guardian* by a *hand*; whether it was, as Tickell pretends to think, that he was unwilling to usurp the praise of others, or, as Steele, with far greater likelihood,  
25 insinuates, that he could not without discontent impart to others any of his own. I have heard that his avidity did not satisfy itself with the air of renown, but that with great eagerness he laid hold on his proportion of the profits.

30 Many of these papers were written with powers truly comic, with nice discrimination of characters, and accurate observation of natural or accidental deviations from propriety; but it was not supposed that he had tried a comedy on the stage, till Steele, after his death,  
35 declared him the author of *The Drummer*. This, however, Steele did not know to be true by any direct testimony; for, when Addison put the play into his

hands, he only told him, it was the work of a 'gentleman in the company'; and when it was received, as is confessed, with cold disapprobation, he was probably less willing to claim it. Tickell omitted it in his collection; but the testimony of Steele, and the total silence 5 of any other claimant, has determined the public to assign it to Addison, and it is now printed with his other poetry. Steele carried *The Drummer* to the play-house, and afterwards to the press, and sold the copy for fifty guineas. 10

To the opinion of Steele may be added the proof supplied by the play itself, of which the characters are such as Addison would have delineated, and the tendency such as Addison would have promoted. That it should have been ill-received would raise wonder, did 15 we not daily see the capricious distribution of theatrical praise.

He was not all this time an indifferent spectator of public affairs. He wrote, as different exigencies required (in 1707), *The present State of the War, and the* 20 *Necessity of an Augmentation*; which, however judicious, being written on temporary topics, and exhibiting no peculiar powers, laid hold on no attention, and has naturally sunk by its own weight into neglect. This cannot be said of the few papers entitled *The Whig* 25 *Examiner*, in which is employed all the force of gay malevolence and humorous satire. Of this paper, which just appeared and expired, Swift remarks, with exultation, 'that it is now down among the dead men.' He might well rejoice at the death of that which he could 30 not have killed. Every reader of every party, since personal malice is past, and the papers which once inflamed the nation are read only as effusions of wit, must wish for more of the *Whig Examiners*; for on no occasion was the genius of Addison more vigorously 35 exerted, and on none did the superiority of his powers more evidently appear. His *Trial of Count Tariff*, writ-

ten to expose the treaty of commerce with France, lived no longer than the question that produced it.

Not long afterwards, an attempt was made to revive *The Spectator*, at a time indeed by no means favorable to literature, when the succession of a new family to the throne filled the nation with anxiety, discord, and confusion; and either the turbulence of the times, or the satiety of the readers, put a stop to the publication, after an experiment of eighty numbers, which were afterwards collected into an eighth volume, perhaps more valuable than any one of those that went before it. Addison produced more than a fourth part; and the other contributors are by no means unworthy of appearing as his associates. The time that had passed during the suspension of *The Spectator*, though it had not lessened his power of humor, seems to have increased his disposition to seriousness: the proportion of his religious to his comic papers is greater than in the former series.

*The Spectator*, from its re-commencement, was published only three times a week; and no discriminative marks were added to the papers. To Addison Tickell has ascribed twenty-three.

*The Spectator* had many contributors; and Steele, whose negligence kept him always in a hurry, when it was his turn to furnish a paper, called loudly for the Letters, of which Addison, whose materials were more, made little use; having recourse to sketches and hints, the product of his former studies, which he now reviewed and completed: among these are named by Tickell the Essays on Wit, those on the Pleasures of the Imagination, and the Criticism on Milton.

When the House of Hanover took possession of the throne it was reasonable to expect that the zeal of Addison would be suitably rewarded. Before the arrival of King George, he was made secretary to the regency, and was required by his office to send notice

to Hanover that the queen was dead, and that the throne was vacant. To do this would not have been difficult to any man but Addison, who was so overwhelmed with the greatness of the event, and so distracted by choice of expression, that the lords, who 5 could not wait for the niceties of criticism, called Mr. Southwell, a clerk in the house, and ordered him to dispatch the message. Southwell readily told what was necessary in the common style of business, and valued himself upon having done what was too hard for Addi- 10 son.

He was better qualified for *The Freeholder*, a paper which he published twice a week, from Dec. 23, 1715, to the middle of the next year. This was undertaken in defense of the established government, sometimes 15 with argument, and sometimes with mirth. In argument he had many equals; but his humor was singular and matchless. Bigotry itself must be delighted with the Tory Foxhunter.

There are however some strokes less elegant, and less 20 decent; such as the *Pretender's Journal*, in which one topic of ridicule is his poverty. This mode of abuse had been employed by Milton against King Charles II.

— *Jacobæ*

Centum, exulantis viscera Marsupii regis.

25

And Oldmixon delights to tell of some alderman of London, that he had more money than the exiled princes; but that which might be expected from Milton's savageness, or Oldmixon's meanness, was not suitable to the delicacy of Addison.

30

Steele thought the humor of *The Freeholder* too nice and gentle for such noisy times; and is reported to have said that the ministry made use of a lute, when they should have called for a trumpet.

This year (1716) he married the Countess-dowager 35 of Warwick, whom he had solicited by a very long and

anxious courtship, perhaps with behavior not very unlike that of Sir Roger to his disdainful widow; and who, I am afraid, diverted herself often by playing with his passion. He is said to have first known her by becoming tutor to her son. 'He formed,' said Tonson, 'the design of getting that lady from the time when he was first recommended into the family.' In what part of his life he obtained the recommendation, or how long, and in what manner, he lived in the family, I know not. His advances at first were certainly timorous, but grew bolder as his reputation and influence increased; till at last the lady was persuaded to marry him, on terms much like those on which a Turkish princess is espoused, to whom the sultan is reported to pronounce, 'Daughter, I give thee this man for thy slave.' The marriage, if uncontradicted report can be credited, made no addition to his happiness; it neither found them nor made them equal. She always remembered her own rank, and thought herself entitled to treat with very little ceremony the tutor of her son. Rowe's ballad of *The Despairing Shepherd* is said to have been written, either before or after marriage, upon this memorable pair; and it is certain that Addison has left behind him no encouragement for ambitious love.

The year after (1717) he rose to his highest elevation, being made Secretary of State. For this employment he might be justly supposed qualified by long practice of business, and by his regular ascent through other offices; but expectation is often disappointed; it is universally confessed that he was unequal to the duties of his place. In the House of Commons he could not speak, and therefore was useless to the defense of the government. In the office, says Pope, he could not issue an order without losing his time in quest of fine expressions. What he gained in rank he lost in credit; and, finding by experience his own inability,

was forced to solicit his dismissal, with a pension of fifteen hundred pounds a year. His friends palliated this relinquishment, of which both friends and enemies knew the true reason, with an account of declining health, and the necessity of recess and quiet. 5

He now returned to his vocation, and began to plan literary occupations for his future life. He purposed a tragedy on the death of Socrates; a story of which, as Tickell remarks, the basis is narrow, and to which I know not how love could have been appended. There 10 would however have been no want either of virtue in the sentiments, or elegance in the language.

He engaged in a nobler work, a *Defense of the Christian Religion*, of which part was published after his death; and he designed to have made a new poetical 15 version of the Psalms.

These pious compositions Pope imputed to a selfish motive, upon the credit, as he owns, of Tonson, who having quarrelled with Addison, and not loving him, said, that when he laid down the secretary's office, he 20 intended to take orders, and obtain a bishopric; 'for,' said he, 'I always thought him a priest in his heart.'

That Pope should have thought this conjecture of Tonson worth remembrance, is a proof, but indeed, so far as I have found, the only proof, that he retained 25 some malignity from their ancient rivalry. Tonson pretended but to guess it; no other mortal ever suspected it; and Pope might have reflected, that a man, who had been Secretary of State in the ministry of Sunderland, knew a nearer way to a bishopric than 30 by defending religion, or translating the Psalms.

It is related, that he had once a design to make an *English Dictionary*, and that he considered Dr. Tillotson as the writer of highest authority. There was formerly sent to me by Mr. Locker, clerk of the Leather- 35 sellers' company, who was eminent for curiosity and literature, a collection of examples selected from Tillot-

son's works, as Locker said, by Addison. It came too late to be of use, so I inspected it but slightly, and remember it indistinctly. I thought the passages too short.

5 Addison, however, did not conclude his life in peaceful studies; but relapsed, when he was near his end, to a political dispute.

It so happened that (1718-19) a controversy was agitated with great vehemence between those friends  
10 of long continuance, Addison and Steele. It may be asked, in the language of Homer, what power or what cause could set them at variance. The subject of their dispute was of great importance. The Earl of Sunderland proposed an act called The Peerage Bill, by which  
15 the number of peers should be fixed, and the king restrained from any new creation of nobility, unless when an old family should be extinct. To this the lords would naturally agree; and the king, who was yet little acquainted with his own prerogative, and, as  
20 is now well known, almost indifferent to the possessions of the crown, had been persuaded to consent. The only difficulty was found among the commons, who were not likely to approve the perpetual exclusion of themselves and their posterity. The bill therefore was  
25 eagerly opposed, and among others by Sir Robert Walpole, whose speech was published.

The lords might think their dignity diminished by improper advancements, and particularly by the introduction of twelve new peers at once, to produce a  
30 majority of Tories in the last reign; an act of authority violent enough, yet certainly legal, and by no means to be compared with that contempt of national right with which, some time afterwards, by the instigation of Whiggism, the commons, chosen by the people for  
35 three years, chose themselves for seven. But, whatever might be the disposition of the Lords, the people had no wish to increase their power. The tendency of the



bill, as Steele observed in a letter to the Earl of Oxford, was to introduce an aristocracy; for a majority in the House of Lords, so limited, would have been despotic and irresistible.

To prevent this subversion of the ancient establishment, Steele, whose pen readily seconded his political passions, endeavored to alarm the nation by a pamphlet called *The Plebeian*. To this an answer was published by Addison, under the title of *The Old Whig*, in which it is not discovered that Steele was then known to be 10 the advocate for the commons. Steele replied by a second *Plebeian*; and, whether by ignorance or by courtesy, confined himself to his question, without any personal notice of his opponent. Nothing hitherto was committed against the laws of friendship, or proprieties 15 of decency; but controvertists cannot long retain their kindness for each other. *The Old Whig* answered *The Plebeian*, and could not forbear some contempt of 'little Dicky, whose trade it was to write pamphlets.' Dicky, however, did not lose his settled veneration for his 20 friend; but contented himself with quoting some lines of *Cato*, which were at once detection and reproof. The bill was laid aside during that session; and Addison died before the next, in which its commitment was rejected by two hundred and sixty-five to one hundred 25 and seventy-seven.

Every reader surely must regret that these two illustrious friends, after so many years past in confidence, and endearment, in unity of interest, conformity of opinion, and fellowship of study, should finally part 30 in acrimonious opposition. Such a controversy was 'Bellum plusquam civile,' as Lucan expresses it. Why could not faction find other advocates? But, among the uncertainties of the human state, we are doomed to number the instability of friendship. 35

Of this dispute I have little knowledge but from the *Biographia Britannica*. *The Old Whig* is not inserted

in Addison's works; nor is it mentioned by Tickell in his *Life*; why it was omitted, the biographers doubtless give the true reason: the fact was too recent, and those who had been heated in the contention were not yet  
5 cool.

The necessity of complying with times, and of sparing persons, is the great impediment of biography. History may be formed from permanent monuments and records; but lives can only be written from personal knowledge, which is growing every day less, and  
10 in a short time is lost for ever. What is known can seldom be immediately told; and when it might be told, it is no longer known. The delicate features of the mind, the nice discriminations of character, and the  
15 minute peculiarities of conduct, are soon obliterated; and it is surely better that caprice, obstinacy, frolic, and folly, however they might delight in the description, should be silently forgotten, than that, by wanton merriment and unseasonable detection, a pang should be  
20 given to a widow, a daughter, a brother, or a friend. As the process of these narratives is now bringing me among my contemporaries, I begin to feel myself 'walking upon ashes under which the fire is not extinguished,' and coming to the time of which it will be proper  
25 rather to say 'nothing that is false, than all that is true.'

The end of this useful life was now approaching.— Addison had for some time been oppressed by shortness of breath, which was now aggravated by a dropsy;  
30 and, finding his danger pressing, he prepared to die conformably to his own precepts and professions.

During this lingering decay, he sent, as Pope relates, a message by the Earl of Warwick to Mr. Gay, desiring to see him. Gay, who had not visited him for some  
35 time before, obeyed the summons, and found himself received with great kindness. The purpose for which the interview had been solicited was then discovered.

Addison told him, that he had injured him; but that, if he recovered, he would recompense him. What the injury was he did not explain, nor did Gay ever know, but supposed that some preferment designed for him, had, by Addison's intervention, been withheld. 5

Lord Warwick was a young man of very irregular life, and perhaps of loose opinions. Addison, for whom he did not want respect, had very diligently endeavored to reclaim him; but his arguments and expostulations had no effect. One experiment, however, remained to 10 be tried: when he found his life near its end, he directed the young lord to be called; and when he desired, with great tenderness, to hear his last injunctions, told him, 'I have sent for you, that you may see how a Christian can die.' What effect this awful scene had on the 15 earl, I know not: he likewise died himself in a short time.

In Tickell's excellent elegy on his friend are these lines:

He taught us how to live; and, oh! too high      20  
The price of knowledge, taught us how to die.—

In which he alludes, as he told Dr. Young, to this moving interview.

Having given directions to Mr. Tickell for the publication of his works, and dedicated them on his death- 25 bed to his friend Mr. Craggs, he died June 17, 1719, at Holland-house, leaving no child but a daughter.

Of his virtue it is a sufficient testimony, that the resentment of party has transmitted no charge of any crime. He was not one of those who are praised only 30 after death; for his merit was so generally acknowledged, that Swift, having observed that his election passed without a contest, adds, that, if he had proposed himself for king, he would hardly have been refused.

His zeal for his party did not extinguish his kindness 35 for the merit of his opponents: when he was secretary

In Ireland, he refused to intermit his acquaintance with Swift.

Of his habits, or external manners, nothing is so often mentioned as that timorous or sullen taciturnity, which 5 his friends called modesty by too mild a name. Steele mentions with great tenderness 'that remarkable bashfulness, which is a cloak that hides and muffles merit'; and tells us, 'that his abilities were covered only by modesty, which doubles the beauties which are seen, 10 and gives credit and esteem to all that are concealed.' Chesterfield affirms, that 'Addison was the most timorous and awkward man that he ever saw.' And Addison, speaking of his own deficiency in conversation, used to say of himself, that, with respect to intellectual wealth, 15 'he could draw bills for a thousand pounds, though he had not a guinea in his pocket.'

That he wanted current coin for ready payment, and by that want was often obstructed and distressed; that he was oppressed by an improper and ungraceful timidity; every testimony concurs to prove; but Chesterfield's 20 representation is doubtless hyperbolical. That man cannot be supposed very unexpert in the arts of conversation and practice of life, who, without fortune or alliance, by his usefulness and dexterity, became Secretary of State; and who died at forty-seven, after having 25 not only stood long in the highest rank of wit and literature, but filled one of the most important offices of state.

The time in which he lived had reason to lament his 30 obstinacy of silence: 'for he was,' says Steele, 'above all men in that talent called humor, and enjoyed it in such perfection, that I have often reflected, after a night spent with him apart from all the world, that I had had the pleasure of conversing with an intimate 35 acquaintance of Terence and Catullus, who had all their wit and nature heightened with humor more exquisite and delightful than any other man ever possessed.'

This is the fondness of a friend; let us hear what is told us by a rival: 'Addison's conversation,' says Pope, 'had something in it more charming than I have found in any other man. But this was only when familiar: before strangers, or perhaps a single stranger, he pre- 5 served his dignity by a stiff silence.'

This modesty was by no means inconsistent with a very high opinion of his own merit. He demanded to be the first name in modern wit; and, with Steele to echo him, used to depreciate Dryden, whom Pope and 10 Congreve defended against them. There is no reason to doubt that he suffered too much pain from the prevalence of Pope's poetical reputation; nor is it without strong reason suspected, that by some disingenuous acts he endeavored to obstruct it; Pope was not the 15 only man whom he insidiously injured, though the only man of whom he could be afraid.

His own powers were such as might have satisfied him with conscious excellence. Of very extensive learning he has indeed given no proofs. He seems to have 20 had small acquaintance with the sciences, and to have read little except Latin and French; but of the Latin poets his *Dialogues on Medals* show that he had perused the works with great diligence and skill. The abundance of his own mind left him little need of adven- 25 titious sentiments; his wit always could suggest what the occasion demanded. He had read with critical eyes the important volume of human life, and knew the heart of man from the depths of stratagem to the surface of affectation.

What he knew he could easily communicate. 'This,' says Steele, 'was particular in this writer, that, when he had taken his resolution, or made his plan for what he designed to write, he would walk about a room, and dictate it into language with as much freedom and ease 35 as any one could write it down, and attend to the coherence and grammar of what he dictated.'

Pope, who can be less suspected of favoring his memory, declares that he wrote very fluently, but was slow and scrupulous in correcting; that many of his *Spectators* were written very fast, and sent immediately to the press; and that it seemed to be for his advantage not to have time for much revisal.

‘He would alter,’ says Pope, ‘any thing to please his friends, before publication; but would not retouch his pieces afterwards: and I believe not one word in *Cato* to which I made an objection was suffered to stand.’

The last line of *Cato* is Pope’s, having been originally written

And, oh! ’twas this that ended Cato’s life.

Pope might have made more objections to the six concluding lines. In the first couplet the words ‘from hence’ are improper; and the second line is taken from Dryden’s *Virgil*. Of the next couplet, the first verse being included in the second, is therefore useless; and in the third, Discord is made to produce Strife.

Of the course of Addison’s familiar day,<sup>1</sup> before his marriage, Pope has given a detail. He had in the house with him Budgell, and perhaps Philips. His chief companions were Steele, Budgell, Philips, Carey, Davenant, and Colonel Brett. With one or other of these he always breakfasted. He studied all the morning, then dined at a tavern; and went afterwards to Button’s

Button had been a servant in the Countess of Warwick’s family; who, under the patronage of Addison, kept a coffee-house on the south side of Russel-street, about two doors from Covent-garden. Here it was that the wits of that time used to assemble. It is said that when Addison had suffered any vexation from the countess, he withdrew the company from Button’s house.

From the coffee-house he went again to a tavern, where he often sat late, and drank too much wine. In the bottle discontent seeks for comfort, cowardice for

<sup>1</sup> Spence.

courage, and bashfulness for confidence. It is not unlikely that Addison was first seduced to excess by the manumission which he obtained from the servile timidity of his sober hours. He that feels oppression from the presence of those to whom he knows himself superior, 5 will desire to set loose his powers of conversation; and who that ever asked succors from Bacchus was able to preserve himself from being enslaved by his auxiliary?

Among those friends it was that Addison displayed the elegance of his colloquial accomplishments, which 10 may easily be supposed such as Pope represents them. The remark of Mandeville, who, when he had passed an evening in his company, declared that he was a parson in a tye-wig, can detract little from his character; he was always reserved to strangers, and was 15 not incited to uncommon freedom by a character like that of Mandeville.

From any minute knowledge of his familiar manners, the intervention of sixty years has now debarred us. Steele once promised Congreve and the public a complete description of his character; but the promises of authors are like the vows of lovers. Steele thought no more on his design, or thought on it with anxiety that at last disgusted him, and left his friend in the hands of Tickell. 25

One slight lineament of his character Swift has preserved. It was his practice, when he found any man invincibly wrong, to flatter his opinions by acquiescence, and sink him yet deeper in absurdity. This artifice of mischief was admired by Stella; and Swift seems to 30 approve her admiration.

His works will supply some information. It appears from his various pictures of the world, that, with all his bashfulness, he had conversed with many distinct classes of men, had surveyed their ways with very diligent observation, and marked with great acuteness the effects of different modes of life. He was a man in

whose presence nothing reprehensible was out of danger; quick in discerning whatever was wrong or ridiculous, and not unwilling to expose it. 'There are,' says Steele, 'in his writings many oblique strokes upon some of the wittiest men of the age.' His delight was more to excite merriment than detestation; and he detects follies rather than crimes.

If any judgment be made, from his books, of his moral character, nothing will be found but purity and excellence. Knowledge of mankind, indeed, less extensive than that of Addison, will show, that to write, and to live, are very different. Many who praise virtue, do no more than praise it. Yet it is reasonable to believe that Addison's professions and practice were at no great variance, since, amidst that storm of faction in which most of his life was passed, though his station made him conspicuous, and his activity made him formidable, the character given him by his friends was never contradicted by his enemies: of those with whom interest or opinion united him he had not only the esteem, but the kindness; and of others whom the violence of opposition drove against him, though he might lose the love, he retained the reverence.

It is justly observed by Tickell, that he employed wit on the side of virtue and religion. He not only made the proper use of wit himself, but taught it to others; and from his time it has been generally subservient to the cause of reason and of truth. He has dissipated the prejudice that had long connected gaiety with vice, and easiness of manners with laxity of principles. He has restored virtue to its dignity, and taught innocence not to be ashamed. This is an elevation of literary character, 'above all Greek, above all Roman fame.' No greater felicity can genius attain, than that of having purified intellectual pleasure, separated mirth from indecency, and wit from licentiousness; of having taught a succession of writers to bring elegance and gaiety to



the aid of goodness; and, if I may use expressions yet more awful, of having 'turned many to righteousness.'

Addison, in his life, and for some time afterwards, was considered by the greater part of readers as supremely excelling both in poetry and criticism. Part 5 of his reputation may be probably ascribed to the advancement of his fortune: when, as Swift observes, he became a statesman, and saw poets waiting at his levee, it is no wonder that praise was accumulated upon him. Much likewise may be more honorably ascribed to his 10 personal character: he who, if he had claimed it, might have obtained the diadem, was not likely to be denied the laurel. '

But time quickly puts an end to artificial and accidental fame; and Addison is to pass through futurity protected only by his genius. Every name which kindness or interest once raised too high, is in danger, lest the next age should, by the vengeance of criticism, sink it in the same proportion. A great writer has lately styled him 'an indifferent poet, and a worse 20 critic.'

His poetry is first to be considered; of which it must be confessed that it has not often those felicities of diction which give lustre to sentiments, or that vigor of sentiment that animates diction: there is little of 25 ardor, vehemence, or transport; there is very rarely the awfulness of grandeur, and not very often the splendor of elegance. He thinks justly; but he thinks faintly. This is his general character; to which, doubtless, many single passages will furnish exceptions. 30

Yet, if he seldom reaches supreme excellence, he rarely sinks into dullness, and is still more rarely entangled in absurdity. He did not trust his powers enough to be negligent. There is in most of his compositions a calmness and equability, deliberate and cautious, sometimes 35 with little that delights, but seldom with any thing that offends.

Of this kind seem to be his poems to Dryden, to Somers, and to the king. His *Ode on St. Cecilia* has been imitated by Pope, and has something in it of Dryden's vigor. Of his account of the English Poets, he used to speak as a 'poor thing'; but it is not worse than his usual strain. He has said, not very judiciously, in his character of Waller,

10 Thy verse could show ev'n Cromwell's innocence,  
And compliment the storms that bore him hence.  
O! had thy Muse not come an age too soon,  
But seen great Nassau on the British throne.  
How had his triumph glitter'd in thy page!

What is this but to say, that he who could compliment Cromwell had been the proper poet for King William?  
15 Addison, however, never printed the piece.

The *Letter from Italy* has been always praised, but has never been praised beyond its merit. It is more correct, with less appearance of labor, and more elegant, with less ambition of ornament, than any other of his  
20 poems. There is, however, one broken metaphor, of which notice may properly be taken:

Fir'd with that name—  
I bridle in my struggling Muse with pain,  
That longs to launch into a nobler strain.

25 To *bridle a goddess* is no very delicate idea; but why must she be *bridled*? because she *longs to launch*; an act which was never hindered by a *bridle*: and whither will she *launch*? into a *nobler strain*. She is in the first line a *horse*, in the second a *boat*; and the care  
30 of the poet is to keep his *horse* or his *boat* from *singing*.

The next composition is the far-famed *Campaign*, which Dr. Warton has termed a 'Gazette in Rhyme,' with harshness not often used by the good nature of  
35 his criticism. Before a censure so severe is admitted, let us consider that war is a frequent subject of poetry, and then inquire who has described it with more just-

ness and force. Many of our own writers tried their powers upon this year of victory; yet Addison's is confessedly the best performance: his poem is the work of a man not blinded by the dust of learning; his images are not borrowed merely from books. The superiority 5, which he confers upon his hero is not personal prowess, and 'mighty bone,' but deliberate intrepidity, a calm command of his passions, and the power of consulting his own mind in the midst of danger. The rejection and contempt of fiction is rational and manly. 10

It may be observed that the last line is imitated by Pope:

Marlb'rough's exploits appear divinely bright—  
Rais'd of themselves, their genuine charms they boast,  
And those that paint them truest, praise them most. 15

This Pope had in his thoughts: but, not knowing how to use what was not his own, he spoiled the thought when he had borrowed it:

The well-sung woes shall soothe my pensive ghost;  
He best can paint them who shall feel them most. 20

Martial exploits may be *painted* perhaps woes may be *painted*; but they are surely not *painted* by being *well-sung*: it is not easy to paint in song, or to sing in colors.

No passage in the *Campaign* has been more often mentioned than the simile of the Angel, which is said in *The Tatler* to be 'one of the noblest thoughts that ever entered into the heart of man,' and is therefore worthy of attentive consideration. Let it be first inquired whether it be a simile. A poetical simile is the discovery 25 of likeness between two actions, in their general nature dissimilar, or of causes terminating by different operations in some resemblance of effect. But the mention of another like consequence from a like cause, or of a like performance by a like agency, is not a simile, but 30 an exemplification. It is not a simile to say that the

Thames waters fields, as the Po waters fields; or that as Hecla vomits flames in Iceland, so Ætna vomits flames in Sicily. When Horace says of Pindar, that he pours his violence and rapidity of verse, as a river  
5 swollen with rain rushes from the mountain; or of himself, that his genius wanders in quest of poetical decorations, as the bee wanders to collect honey; he, in either case, produces a simile; the mind is impressed with the resemblance of things generally unlike, as unlike as  
10 intellect and body. But if Pindar had been described as writing with the copiousness and grandeur of Homer, or Horace had told that he reviewed and finished his own poetry with the same care as Isocrates polished his orations, instead of similitude he would have exhibited  
15 almost identity; he would have given the same portraits with different names. In the poem now examined, when the English are represented as gaining a fortified pass, by repetition of attack and perseverance of resolution; their obstinacy of courage, and vigor of onset, is well  
20 illustrated by the sea that breaks, with incessant battery, the dikes of Holland. This is a simile. But when Addison, having celebrated the beauty of Marlborough's person, tells us, that 'Achilles thus was formed with every grace,' here is no simile, but a mere exemplification.  
25 A simile may be compared to lines converging at a point, and is more excellent as the lines approach from greater distance; an exemplification may be considered as two parallel lines, which run on together without approximation, never far separated, and never joined.  
30 Marlborough is so like the angel in the poem, that the action of both is almost the same, and performed by both in the same manner. Marlborough 'teaches the battle to rage'; the angel 'directs the storm': Marlborough is 'unmoved in peaceful thought'; the angel is  
35 'calm and serene': Marlborough stands 'unmoved amidst the shock of hosts'; the angel rides 'calm in the whirlwind.' The lines on Marlborough are just and

noble; but the simile gives almost the same images a second time.

But perhaps this thought, though hardly a simile, was remote from vulgar conceptions, and required great labor of research, or dexterity of application. Of this, 5 Dr. Madden, a name which Ireland ought to honor, once gave me his opinion. 'If I had set,' said he, 'ten schoolboys to write on the battle of Blenheim, and eight had brought me the angel, I should not have been surprised.' 10

The opera of *Rosamond*, though it is seldom mentioned, is one of the first of Addison's compositions. The subject is well chosen, the fiction is pleasing, and the praise of Marlborough, for which the scene gives an opportunity, is, what perhaps every human excellence 15 must be, the product of good luck, improved by genius. The thoughts are sometimes great and sometimes tender; the versification is easy and gay. There is doubtless some advantage in the shortness of the lines, which there is little temptation to load with expletive epithets. 20 The dialogue seems commonly better than the songs. The two comic characters of Sir Trusty and Grideline, though of no great value, are yet such as the poet intended. Sir Trusty's account of the death of Rosamond is, I think, too grossly absurd. The whole drama 25 is airy and elegant; engaging in its process, and pleasing in its conclusion. If Addison had cultivated the lighter parts of poetry, he would probably have excelled.

The tragedy of *Cato*, which, contrary to the rule 30 observed in selecting the works of others poets, has, by the weight of its character forced its way into the late collection, is unquestionably the noblest production of Addison's genius. Of a work so much read, it is difficult to say any thing new. About things on which 35 the public thinks long, it commonly attains to think right; and of *Cato* it has been not unjustly determined,

that it is rather a poem in dialogue than a drama, rather a succession of just sentiments in elegant language, than a representation of natural affections, or of any state probable or possible in human life. Nothing here  
5 'excites or assuages emotion'; here is 'no magical power of raising fantastic terror or wild anxiety.' The events are expected without solicitude, and are remembered without joy or sorrow. Of the agents we have no care; we consider not what they are doing, or what they are  
10 suffering; we wish only to know what they have to say. Cato is a being above our solicitude; a man of whom the gods take care, and whom we leave to their care with heedless confidence. To the rest, neither gods  
15 amongst them that strongly attracts either affection or esteem. But they are made the vehicles of such sentiments and such expression, that there is scarcely a scene in the play which the reader does not wish to impress upon his memory.

20 When *Cato* was shown to Pope, he advised the author to print it, without any theatrical exhibition; supposing that it would be read more favorably than heard. Addison declared himself of the same opinion; but urged the importunity of his friends for its appearance  
25 on the stage. The emulation of parties made it successful beyond expectation; and its success has introduced or confirmed among us the use of dialogue too declamatory, of unassuming elegance, and chill philosophy.

The universality of applause, however it might quell  
30 the censure of common mortals, had no other effect than to harden Dennis in fixed dislike; but his dislike was not merely capricious. He found and showed many faults; he showed them indeed with anger, but he found them with acuteness, such as ought to rescue his criticism from oblivion; though, at last, it will have no other  
35 life than it derives from the work which it endeavors to oppress.

Why he pays no regard to the opinion of the audience, he gives his reason, by remarking, that,

‘A deference is to be paid to a general applause, when it appears that that applause is natural and spontaneous; but that little regard is to be had to it, when 5 it is affected and artificial. Of all the tragedies which in his memory have had vast and violent runs, not one has been excellent, few have been tolerable, most have been scandalous. When a poet writes a tragedy, who knows he has judgment, and who feels he has genius, 10 that poet presumes upon his own merit, and scorns to make a cabal. That people come coolly to the representation of such a tragedy, without any violent expectation, or delusive imagination, or invincible prepossession; that such an audience is liable to receive the 15 impressions which the poem shall naturally make on them, and to judge by their own reason, and their own judgments, and that reason and judgment are calm and serene, not formed by nature to make proselytes, and to control and lord it over the imaginations of others. 20 But that when an author writes a tragedy, who knows he has neither genius nor judgment, he has recourse to the making a party, and he endeavors to make up in industry what is wanting in talent, and to supply by poetical craft the absence of poetical art: that such 25 an author is humbly contented to raise men’s passions by a plot without doors, since he despairs of doing it by that which he brings upon the stage. That party and passion, and prepossession, are clamorous and tumultuous things, and so much the more clamorous and 30 tumultuous by how much the more erroneous: that they domineer and tyrannize over the imaginations of persons who want judgment, and sometimes too of those who have it; and, like a fierce and outrageous torrent, bear down all opposition before them.’ 35

He then condemns the neglect of poetical justice; which is always one of his favorite principles

'Tis certainly the duty of every tragic poet, by the exact distribution of poetical justice, to imitate the Divine dispensation, and to inculcate a particular Providence. 'Tis true, indeed, upon the stage of the world, 5 the wicked sometimes prosper, and the guiltless suffer. But that is permitted by the Governor of the world, to show, from the attribute of his infinite justice, that there is a compensation in futurity, to prove the immortality of the human soul, and the certainty of future 10 rewards and punishments. But the poetical persons in tragedy exist no longer than the reading, or the representation; the whole extent of their entity is circumscribed by those; and therefore, during that reading or representation, according to their merits or demerits, 15 they must be punished or rewarded. If this is not done, there is no impartial distribution of poetical justice, no instructive lecture of a particular Providence, and no imitation of the Divine dispensation. And yet the author of this tragedy does not only run counter to 20 this, in the fate of his principal character; but every where, throughout it, makes virtue suffer, and vice triumph: for not only Cato is vanquished by Cæsar, but the treachery and perfidiousness of Syphax prevails over the honest simplicity and the credulity of Juba; 25 and the sly subtlety and dissimulation of Portius over the generous frankness and open-heartedness of Marcus.'

Whatever pleasure there may be in seeing crimes punished and virtue rewarded, yet since wickedness often prospers in real life, the poet is certainly at 30 liberty to give it prosperity on the stage. For if poetry has an imitation of reality, how are its laws broken by exhibiting the world in its true form? The stage may sometimes gratify our wishes; but, if it be truly the 'mirror of life,' it ought to show us sometimes what 35 we are to expect.

Dennis objects to the characters, that they are not natural, or reasonable; but as heroes and heroines are



not beings that are seen every day, it is hard to find upon what principles their conduct shall be tried. It is, however, not useless to consider what he says of the manner in which Cato receives the account of his son's death.

5

'Nor is the grief of Cato, in the fourth act, one jot more in nature than that of his son and Lucia in the third. Cato receives the news of his son's death not only with dry eyes, but with a sort of satisfaction; and in the same page sheds tears for the calamity of 10 his country, and does the same thing in the next page upon the bare apprehension of the danger of his friends. Now, since the love of one's country is the love of one's countrymen, as I have shown upon another occasion, I desire to ask these questions: Of all our country- 15 men, which do we love most, those whom we know, or those whom we know not? And of those whom we know, which do we cherish most, our friends or our enemies? And of our friends, which are the dearest to us, those who are related to us, or those who are 20 not? And of all our relations, for which have we most tenderness, for those who are near to us, or for those who are remote? And of our near relations, which are the nearest, and consequently the dearest to us, our offspring, or others? Our offspring most certainly; as 25 Nature, or in other words, Providence, has wisely contrived for the preservation of mankind. Now, does it not follow from what has been said, that for a man to receive the news of his son's death with dry eyes, and to weep at the same time for the calamities of his 30 country, is a wretched affectation, and a miserable inconsistency? Is not that, in plain English, to receive with dry eyes the news of the deaths of those for whose sake our country is a name so dear to us, and at the same time to shed tears for those for whose sakes our 35 country is not a name so dear to us.'

But this formidable assailant is least resistible when,

he attacks the probability of the action, and the reasonableness of the plan. Every critical reader must remark, that Addison has, with a scrupulosity almost unexampled on the English stage, confined himself in  
 5 time to a single day, and in place to rigorous unity. The scene never changes, and the whole action of the play passes in the great hall of Cato's house at Utica. Much therefore is done in the hall, for which any other place had been more fit; and this impropriety affords  
 10 Dennis many hints of merriment, and opportunities of triumph. The passage is long; but as such disquisitions are not common, and the objections are skillfully formed and vigorously urged, those who delight in critical controversy will not think it tedious.

- 15 Such is the censure of Dennis. There is, as Dryden expresses it, perhaps 'too much horse-play in his railery'; but if his jests are coarse, his arguments are strong. Yet, as we love better to be pleased than to be taught, *Cato* is read, and the critic is neglected.
- 20 Flushed with consciousness of these detections of absurdity in the conduct, he afterwards attacked the sentiments of *Cato*; but he then amused himself with petty cavils, and minute objections.

Of Addison's smaller poems, no particular mention is  
 25 necessary; they have little that can employ or require a critic. The parallel of the princes and gods, in his verses to Kneller, is often happy, but is too well known to be quoted.

His translations, so far as I have compared them,  
 30 want the exactness of a scholar. That he understood his authors cannot be doubted; but his versions will not teach others to understand them, being too licentiously paraphrastical. They are, however, for the most part, smooth and easy; and, what is the first excellence  
 35 of a translator, such as may be read with pleasure by those who do not know the originals.

His poetry is polished and pure; the product of a mind too judicious to commit faults, but not sufficiently vigorous to attain excellence. He has sometimes a striking line, or a shining paragraph; but in the whole he is warm rather than fervid, and shows more dexterity 5 than strength. He was, however, one of our earliest examples of correctness.

The versification which he had learned from Dryden he debased rather than refined. His rhymes are often dissonant; in his *Georgic* he admits broken lines. He 10 uses both triplets and alexandrines, but triplets more frequently in his translations than his other works. The mere structure of verses seems never to have engaged much of his care. But his lines are very smooth in *Rosamond*, and too smooth in *Cato*. 15

Addison is now to be considered as a critic; a name which the present generation is scarcely willing to allow him. His criticism is condemned as tentative or experimental, rather than scientific; and he is considered as deciding by taste rather than by principles. 20

It is not uncommon for those who have grown wise by the labor of others, to add a little of their own, and overlook their masters. Addison is now despised by some who perhaps would never have seen his defects, but by the lights which he afforded them. That he al- 25 ways wrote as he would think it necessary to write now, cannot be affirmed; his instructions were such as the character of his readers made proper. That general knowledge which now circulates in common talk, was in his time rarely to be found. Men not professing 30 learning were not ashamed of ignorance; and in the female world, any acquaintance with books was distinguished only to be censured. His purpose was to infuse literary curiosity, by gentle and unsuspected conveyance, into the gay, the idle, and the wealthy; he 35 therefore presented knowledge in the most alluring form, not lofty and austere, but accessible and familiar. When

he showed them their defects, he showed them likewise that they might be easily supplied. His attempt succeeded; inquiry was awakened, and comprehension expanded. An emulation of intellectual elegance was excited, and from his time to our own, life has been gradually exalted, and conversation purified and enlarged.

Dryden had, not many years before, scattered criticism over his prefaces with very little parsimony; but, though he sometimes condescended to be somewhat familiar, his manner was in general too scholastic for those who had yet their rudiments to learn, and found it not easy to understand their master. His observations were framed rather for those that were learning to write, than for those that read only to talk.

An instructor like Addison was now wanting, whose remarks being superficial, might be easily understood, and being just, might prepare the mind for more attainments. Had he presented *Paradise Lost* to the public with all the pomp of system and severity of science, the criticism would perhaps have been admired, and the poem still have been neglected; but by the blandishments of gentleness and facility he has made Milton an universal favorite, with whom readers of every class think it necessary to be pleased.

He descended now and then to lower disquisitions; and by a serious display of the beauties of *Chevy-Chase* exposed himself to the ridicule of Wagstaff, who bestowed a like pompous character on 'Tom Thumb'; and to the contempt of Dennis, who, considering the fundamental position of his criticism, that *Chevy-Chase* pleases, and ought to please, because it is natural, observes, 'that there is a way of deviating from nature by bombast or tumor, which soars above nature, and enlarges images beyond their real bulk; by affectation, which forsakes nature in quest of something unsuitable; and by imbecility, which degrades nature by faintness

and diminution, by obscuring its appearances, and weakening its effects.' In *Chevy-Chase* there is not much of either bombast or affectation; but there is chill and lifeless imbecility. The story cannot possibly be told in a manner that shall make less impression on 5 the mind.

Before the profound observers of the present race repose too securely on the consciousness of their superiority to Addison, let them consider his *Remarks on Ovid*, in which may be found specimens of criticism 10 sufficiently subtle and refined: let them peruse likewise his *Essays on Wit*, and on the pleasures of Imagination, in which he founds art on the base of nature, and draws the principles of invention from dispositions inherent in the mind of man with skill and elegance, such 15 as his contemners will not easily attain.

As a describer of life and manners, he must be allowed to stand perhaps the first of the first rank. His humor, which as Steele observes, is peculiar to himself, is so happily diffused as to give the grace of 20 novelty to domestic scenes and daily occurrences. He neither 'outsteps the modesty of nature,' nor raises merriment or wonder by the violation of truth. His figures never divert by distortion, nor amaze by aggravation. He copies life with so much fidelity, that he can be 25 hardly said to invent; yet his exhibitions have an air so much original, that it is difficult to suppose them not merely the product of imagination.

As a teacher of wisdom, he may be confidently followed. His religion has nothing in it enthusiastic or 30 superstitious: he appears neither weakly credulous, nor wantonly sceptical; his morality is neither dangerously lax, nor impracticably rigid. All the enchantment of fancy, and all the cogency of argument, are employed to recommend to the reader his real interest, the care 35 of pleasing the author of his being. Truth is shown sometimes as the phantom of a vision; sometimes ap-

pears half-veiled in an allegory: sometimes attracts regard in the robes of fancy, and sometimes steps forth in the confidence of reason. She wears a thousand dresses, and in all is pleasing.

5

*Mille habet ornatus, mille decenter habet.*

His prose is the model of the middle style; on grave subjects not formal, on light occasions not grovelling, pure without scrupulosity, and exact without apparent elaboration; always equable, and always easy, without  
10 glowing words or pointed sentences. Addison never deviates from his track to snatch a grace; he seeks no ambitious ornaments, and tries no hazardous innovations. His page is always luminous, but never blazes in unexpected splendor.

15 It was apparently his principal endeavor to avoid all harshness and severity of diction; he is therefore sometimes verbose in his transitions and connections, and sometimes descends too much to the language of conversation; yet if his language had been less idiomatical,  
20 it might have lost somewhat of its genuine Anglicism.

What he attempted, he performed; he is never feeble, and he did not wish to be energetic; he is never rapid, and he never stagnates. His sentences have neither studied amplitude, nor affected brevity: his periods,  
25 though not diligently rounded, are voluble and easy. Whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison.

**On the Death of Mr. Robert Levett,  
a Practiser in Physic**

[WRITTEN IN 1782]

CONDEMN'D to Hope's delusive mine,  
As on we toil from day to day,  
By sudden blast, or slow decline,  
Our social comforts drop away.

Well try'd through many a varying year, 5  
See Levett to the grave descend,  
Officious, innocent, sincere,  
Of ev'ry friendless name the friend.

Yet still he fills Affection's eye;  
Obscurely wise, and coarsely kind; 10  
Nor, letter'd Arrogance, deny  
Thy praise to merit unrefin'd.

When fainting Nature call'd for aid,  
And hov'ring Death prepar'd the blow,  
His vig'rous remedy display'd 15  
The power of art without the show.

In Misery's darkest cavern known,  
His ready help was ever nigh,  
Where hopeless Anguish pour'd his groan,  
And lonely Want retir'd to die. 20

No summons mock'd by chill delay,  
No petty gains disdain'd by pride,  
The modest wants of ev'ry day  
The toil of ev'ry day supply'd.

His virtues walk'd their narrow round, 25  
Nor made a pause, nor left a void;  
And sure the Eternal Master found  
His single talent well employ'd.

The busy day, the peaceful night, 30  
Unfelt, uncounted, glided by;  
His frame was firm, his powers were bright,  
Though now his eightieth year was nigh.

Then with no throbs of fiery pain,  
No cold gradations of decay, 35  
Death broke at once the vital chain,  
And freed his soul the nearest way.



## Letters

TO WILLIAM STRAHAN

Nov. 1, 1751.

DEAREST SIR:

The message which you sent me by Mr. Stuart I do not consider as at all your own, but if you were contented to be the deliverer of it to me, you must favor 5 me so far as to return my answer, which I have written down to spare you the unpleasing office of doing it in your own words. You advise me to write, I know with very kind intentions, nor do I intend to treat your counsel with any disregard when I declare that 10 in the present state of the matter 'I shall *not* write'-- otherwise than the words following:

'That my resolution has long been, and is *not* now altered, and is now *less* likely to be altered, that I shall *not* see the Gentlemen Partners till the first volume 15 is in the press, which they may forward or retard by dispensing or not dispensing with the last message.'

Be pleased to lay this my determination before them this morning, for I shall think of taking my measures accordingly to-morrow evening, only this that I mean 20 no harm, but that my citadel shall not be taken by storm while I can defend it, and that if a blockade is intended, the country is under the command of my batteries, I shall think of laying it under contribution to-morrow evening.

I am, Sir,

25

Your most obliged, most obedient,  
and most humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

TO MISS BOOTHBY

January 8, 1756.

HONORED MADAM:

I beg of you to endeavor to live. I have returned your *Law*, which, however, I earnestly entreat you to give me. I am in great trouble; if you can write three words to me, be pleased to do it. I am afraid to say much, and cannot say nothing when my dearest is in danger.

The all-merciful God have mercy on you.

10

I am, Madam,

Your, &amp;c.,

SAM. JOHNSON.

TO MR. BURNEY, IN LYNNE, NORFOLK

SIR:

That I may show myself sensible of your favors, and not commit the same fault a second time, I make haste to answer the letter which I received this morning. The truth is, the other likewise was received, and I wrote an answer; but being desirous to transmit you some proposals and receipts, I waited till I could find a convenient conveyance, and day was passed after day, till other things drove it from my thoughts: yet not so, but that I remember with great pleasure your commendation of my *Dictionary*. Your praise was welcome, not only because I believe it was sincere, but because praise has been very scarce. A man of your candor will be surprised when I tell you, that among all my acquaintance there were only two who, upon the publication of my book, did not endeavor to depress me with threats of censure from the public, or with objections learned from those who had learned them from my own Preface. Yours is the only letter of good will that I have received: though, indeed, I am promised something of that sort from Sweden.

How my new edition will be received I know not; the subscription has not been very successful. I shall publish about March.

If you can direct me how to send proposals, I should wish that they were in such hands. 5

I remember, Sir, in some of the first letters with which you favored me, you mentioned your lady. May I inquire after her? In return for the favors which you have shown me, it is not much to tell you, that I wish you and her all that can conduce to your happiness. 10

I am, Sir,

Your most obliged,

And most humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

Gough Square, Dec. 24, 1757.

15

TO MRS. JOHNSON (HIS MOTHER)

HONORED MADAM :

The account which Miss gives me of your health pierces my heart. God comfort and preserve you and save you, for the sake of Jesus Christ.

I would have Miss read to you from time to time 20 the Passion of our Savior, and sometimes the sentences in the Communion Service, beginning, 'Come unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'

I have just now read a physical book, which inclines 25 me to think that a strong infusion of the bark would do you good. Do, dear mother, try it.

Pray, send me your blessing, and forgive all that I have done amiss to you. And whatever you would have done, and what debts you would have paid first, or 30 any thing else that you would direct, let Miss put it down; I shall endeavor to obey you.

I have got twelve guineas to send you, but unhappily

am at a loss how to send it to-night. If I cannot send it to-night, it will come by the next post.

Pray, do not omit any thing mentioned in this letter; God bless you for ever and ever.

5

Jan. 13, 1759.

I am your dutiful son,

SAM. JOHNSON.

TO MISS PORTER

MY DEAR MISS:

I think myself obliged to you beyond all expression of gratitude for your care of my dear mother. God  
10 grant it may not be without success. Tell Kitty that I shall never forget her tenderness for her mistress. Whatever you can do, continue to do. My heart is very full.

I hope you received twelve guineas on Monday. I  
15 found a way of sending them by means of the post-master, after I had written my letter, and hope they came safe. I will send you more in a few days. God bless you all. I am, my dear,

Your most obliged

20

and most humble servant,

Jan. 16, 1759.

SAM. JOHNSON.

Over the leaf is a letter to my mother.

(ON THE BACK)

DEAR HONORED MOTHER:

Your weakness afflicts me beyond what I am willing  
25 to communicate to you. I do not think you unfit to face death, but I know not how to bear the thought of losing you. Endeavor to do all you [can] for yourself. Eat as much as you can.

I pray often for you; do you pray for me. I have  
30 nothing to add to my last letter.

I am, dear, dear mother,

Your dutiful son,

Jan. 16, 1759.

SAM. JOHNSON.

DEAR HONORED MOTHER:

I fear you are too ill for long letters; therefore I will only tell you, you have from me all the regard that can possibly subsist in the heart. I pray God to bless you for evermore, for Jesus Christ's sake. 5  
Amen.

Let Miss write to me every post, however short.

I am, dear mother,

Your dutiful son,

Jan. 18, 1759.

SAM. JOHNSON. 10

TO MISS PORTER

DEAR MISS:

I will, if it be possible, come down to you. God grant, I may yet [find] my dear mother breathing and sensible. Do not tell her lest I disappoint her. If I miss to write next post, I am on the road. 15

I am, my dearest Miss,

Your most humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

Jan. 20, 1759.

6.

TO MRS. JOHNSON

DEAR HONORED MOTHER:

20

Neither your condition nor your character make it fit for me to say much. You have been the best mother, and I believe the best woman in the world. I thank you for your indulgence to me, and beg forgiveness of all that I have done ill, and all that I have omitted 25 to do well. God grant you his Holy Spirit, and receive you to everlasting happiness, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen. Lord Jesus receive your spirit. Amen.

I am, dear, dear mother,

Your dutiful son,

Jan. 20, 1759.

SAM. JOHNSON.

30

TO A LADY WHO SOLICITED HIM TO OBTAIN THE ARCH-  
BISHOP OF CANTERBURY'S PATRONAGE TO HAVE HER  
SON SENT TO THE UNIVERSITY

MADAM:

I hope you will believe that my delay in answering your letter could proceed only from my unwillingness to destroy any hope that you had formed. Hope is  
5 itself a species of happiness, and, perhaps, the chief happiness which this world affords: but, like all other pleasures immoderately enjoyed, the excesses of hope must be expiated by pain; and expectations improperly indulged must end in disappointment. If it be asked,  
10 what is the improper expectation which it is dangerous to indulge, experience will quickly answer, that it is such expectation as is dictated not by reason, but by desire; expectation raised, not by the common occurrences of life, but by the wants of the expectant; an  
15 expectation that requires the common course of things to be changed, and the general rules of action to be broken.

When you made your request to me, you should have considered, Madam, what you were asking. You ask  
20 me to solicit a great man, to whom I never spoke, for a young person whom I had never seen, upon a supposition which I had no means of knowing to be true. There is no reason why, amongst all the great, I should choose to supplicate the Archbishop, nor why, among all the  
25 possible objects of his bounty, the Archbishop should choose your son. I know, Madam, how unwillingly conviction is admitted, when interest opposes it; but surely, Madam, you must allow, that there is no reason why that should be done by me, which every other man  
30 may do with equal reason, and which, indeed, no man can do properly, without some very particular relation both to the Archbishop and to you. If I could help you in this exigence by any proper means, it would give me pleasure; but this proposal is so very remote

from all usual methods, that I cannot comply with it, but at the risk of such answer and suspicions as I believe you do not wish me to undergo.

I have seen your son this morning; he seems a pretty youth, and will, perhaps, find some better friend than 5 I can procure him; but, though he should at last miss the University, he may still be wise, useful, and happy.

I am, Madam,

Your most humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON. 10

June 8, 1762.

TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE THE EARL OF BUTE

MY LORD:

When the bills were yesterday delivered to me by Mr. Wedderburne, I was informed by him of the future favors which his Majesty has, by your Lordship's recom- 15 mendation, been induced to intend for me.

Bounty always receives part of its value from the manner in which it is bestowed; your Lordship's kindness includes every circumstance that can gratify delicacy, or enforce obligation. You have conferred your 20 favors on a man who has neither alliance nor interest, who has not merited them by services, nor courted them by officiousness; you have spared him the shame of solicitation, and the anxiety of suspense.

What has been thus elegantly given, will, I hope, 25 not be reproachfully enjoyed; I shall endeavor to give your Lordship the only recompense which generosity desires—the gratification of finding that your benefits are not improperly bestowed. I am, my Lord,

Your Lordship's most obliged,

80

Most obedient, and most humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

July 20, 1762.

TO BENNET LANGTON, AT LANGTON, LINCOLNSHIRE

DEAR SIR:

What your friends have done, that from your departure till now nothing has been heard of you, none of us are able to inform the rest; but as we are all  
5 neglected alike, no one thinks himself entitled to the privilege of complaint.

I should have known nothing of you or of Langton, from the time that dear Miss Langton left us, had not I met Mr. Simpson, of Lincoln, one day in the street,  
10 by whom I was informed that Mr. Langton, your Mamma, and yourself, had been all ill, but that you were all recovered.

That sickness should suspend your correspondence, I did not wonder; but hoped that it would be renewed at  
15 your recovery.

Since you will not inform us where you are, or how you live, I know not whether you desire to know anything of us. However, I will tell you that the Club subsists, but we have the loss of Burke's company since  
20 he has been engaged in public business, in which he has gained more reputation than perhaps any man at his [first] appearance ever gained before. He made two speeches in the House for repealing the Stamp Act, which were publicly commended by Mr. Pitt, and have  
25 filled the town with wonder.

Burke is a great man by nature, and is expected soon to attain civil greatness. I am grown greater too, for I have maintained the newspapers these many weeks; and what is greater still, I have risen every morning  
30 since New Year's day, at about eight; when I was up, I have indeed done but little; yet it is no slight advancement to obtain for so many hours more, the consciousness of being.

I wish you were in my new study; I am now writing  
85 the first letter in it. I think it looks very pretty about me.



Dyer is constant at the Club; Hawkins is remiss; I am not over diligent. Dr. Nugent, Dr. Goldsmith, and Mr. Reynolds, are very constant. Mr. Lye is printing his Saxon and Gothic *Dictionary*; all the Club subscribers.

You will pay my respects to all my Lincolnshire friends.

I am, dear Sir,

Most affectionately yours,

SAM. JOHNSON.

March 9, 1766.

Johnson's Court, Fleet Street.

TO JAMES BOSWELL

DEAR SIR:

If you are now able to comprehend that I might neglect to write without diminution of affection, you have taught me, likewise, how that neglect may be easily felt without resentment. I wished for your letter a long time, and when it came, it amply recompensed the delay. I never was so much pleased as now with your account of yourself; and sincerely hope, that between public business, improving studies, and domestic pleasures, neither melancholy nor caprice will find any place for entrance. Whatever philosophy may determine of material nature, it is certainly true of intellectual nature that it *abhors a vacuum*: our minds cannot be empty; and evil will break in upon them, if they are not preoccupied by good. My dear Sir, mind your studies, mind your business, make your lady happy, and be a good Christian. After this,

tristitiam et metus  
Trades protervis in mare Creticum  
Portare ventis.

30

If we perform our duty, we shall be safe and steady, 'Sive per' &c., whether we climb the Highlands, or are tost among the Hebrides; and I hope the time

will come when we may try our powers both with cliffs and water. I see but little of Lord Elibank, I know not why; perhaps by my own fault. I am this day going into Staffordshire and Derbyshire for six weeks.

5

I am, dear Sir,

Your most affectionate,

And most humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

London, June 20, 1771.

TO MRS. THRALE

10

Ashbourne, July 3, 1771.

DEAR MADAM:

Last Saturday I came to Ashbourne; the dangers or the pleasures of the journey I have at present no disposition to recount; else might I paint the beauties of  
15 my native plains; might I tell of 'the smiles of nature, and the charms of art': else might I relate how I crossed the Staffordshire canal, one of the great efforts of human labor, and human contrivance; which, from the bridge on which I viewed it, passed away on either  
20 side, and loses itself in distant regions, uniting waters that nature had divided, and dividing lands which nature had united. I might tell how these reflections fermented in my mind till the chaise stopped at Ashbourne, at Ashbourne in the Peak. Let not the barren name of the  
25 Peak terrify you; I have never wanted strawberries and cream. The great bull has no disease but age. I hope in time to be like the great bull; and hope you will be like him too a hundred years hence. I am, &c.

SAM. JOHNSON.

30 MR. JAMES MACPHERSON:

I received your foolish and impudent letter. Any violence offered me I shall do my best to repel; and what I cannot do for myself the law shall do for me.

I hope I shall never be deterred from detecting what I think a cheat, by the menaces of a ruffian.

What would you have me retract? I thought your book an imposture; I think it an imposture still. For this opinion I have given my reasons to the public, which I here dare you to refute. Your rage I defy. Your abilities, since your *Homer*, are not so formidable; and what I hear of your morals, inclines me to pay regard not to what you shall say, but to what you shall prove. You may print this if you will. 10

SAM. JOHNSON.

TO MRS. THRALE

Lichfield, June 19, 1775.

DEAR MADAM:

I hope it is very true that Ralph mends, and wish you were gone to see him, that you might come back 15 again.

Queeney revenges her long task upon Mr. Baretti's hen, who must sit on duck eggs a week longer than on her own. I hope she takes great care of my hen, and the Guinea hen, and her pretty little brood. 20

I was afraid Mawbey would succeed, and have little hope from the scrutiny. Did you ever know a scrutiny change the account?

Miss A—— does not run after me, but I do not want her, here are other ladies. 25

*Invenies alium, si te hic fastidit Alexis.*

Miss . . . grows old, and Miss Vyse has been ill, but I believe she came to me as soon as she got out. And I can always go to Stowhill. So never grieve about me. Only flatulencies are come again. 30

Your dissertation upon Queeney is very deep. I know not what to say to the chief question. Nature probably

has some part in human characters, and accident has some part; which has most we will try to settle when we meet.

Small letters will undoubtedly gain room for more 5 words, but, words are useless if they cannot be read. The lines need not all be kept distinct, and some words I shall wish to leave out, though very few. It must be revised before it is engraved. I always told you that Mr. Thrale was a man, take him for all in all, 10 you ne'er will look upon his like; but you never mind him nor me, till time forces conviction into your steely bosom. You will, perhaps, find all right about the house and the windows.

Pray always suppose that I send my respects to 15 Master, and Queeney, and Harry, and Susey, and Sophy.

Poor Lucy mends very slowly, but she is very good-humored, while I do just as she would have me.

Lady Smith has got a new post-chaise, which is not nothing to talk on at Lichfield. Little things here serve 20 for conversation. Mrs. Aston's parrot pecked my leg, and I heard of it some time after at Mrs. Cobb's.

———We deal in nicer things  
Than routing armies and dethroning kings.

A week ago Mrs. Cobb gave me sweetmeats to break- 25 fast, and I heard of it last night at Stowhill.

If you are for small talk,

———Come on, and do the best you can,  
I fear not you, nor yet a better man.

I could tell you about Lucy's two cats, and Brill her 30 brother's old dog, who is gone deaf; but the day would fail me. *Suadentque cadentia sidera somnum.* So said Æneas. But I have not yet had my dinner. I have begun early, for what would become of the nation, if

a letter of this importance should miss the post? Pray, write to, dearest Madam,

Your, &c.,

SAM. JOHNSON.

TO MRS. BOSWELL

MADAM:

5

You must not think me uncivil in omitting to answer the letter with which you favored me some time ago. I imagined it to have been written without Mr. Boswell's knowledge, and therefore supposed the answer to require what I could not find, a private conveyance. 10

The difference with Lord Auchinleck is now over; and since young Alexander has appeared, I hope no more difficulties will arise among you; for I sincerely wish you all happy. Do not teach the young ones to dislike me as you dislike me yourself; but let me at least 15 have Veronica's kindness, because she is my acquaintance.

You will now have Mr. Boswell home; it is well that you have him; he has led a wild life. I have taken him to Lichfield, and he has followed Mr. Thrall to Bath. 20 Pray take care of him and tame him. The only thing in which I have the honor to agree with you is in loving him; and while we are so much of a mind in a matter of so much importance, our other quarrels will, I hope, produce no great bitterness. I am, Madam, 25

Your most humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

May 16, 1776.

TO THE KING

SIR:

I presume to lay before your Majesty the last labors 30 of a learned Bishop, who died in the toils and duties of his calling. He is now beyond the reach of all

earthly honors and rewards; and only the hope of inciting others to imitate him, makes it now fit to be remembered, that he enjoyed in his life the favor of your Majesty.

- 5 The tumultuary life of Princes seldom permits them to survey the wide extent of national interest, without losing sight of private merit; to exhibit qualities which may be imitated by the highest and the humblest of mankind; and to be at once amiable and great.
- 10 Such characters, if now and then they appear in history, are contemplated with admiration. May it be the ambition of all your subjects to make haste with their tribute of reverence; and as posterity may learn from your Majesty how Kings should live, may they
- 15 learn, likewise, from your people, how they should be honored. I am,

May it please your Majesty,  
With the most profound respect,  
Your Majesty's

- 20 Most dutiful and devoted  
SUBJECT AND SERVANT.

TO MRS. BOSWELL

MADAM:

- Though I am well enough pleased with the taste of sweetmeats, very little of the pleasure which I received
- 25 at the arrival of your jar of marmalade arose from eating it. I received it as a token of friendship, as a proof of reconciliation, things much sweeter than sweetmeats, and upon this consideration I return you, dear Madam, my sincerest thanks. By having your
- 30 kindness I think I have a double security for the continuance of Mr. Boswell's, which it is not to be expected that any man can long keep, when the influence of a lady so highly and so justly valued operates against

him. Mr. Boswell will tell you that I was always faithful to your interest, and always endeavored to exalt you in his estimation. You must now do the same for me. We must all help one another, and you must now consider me as, dear Madam,

5

Your most obliged,

And most humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

July 22, 1777.

TO JAMES BOSWELL

DEAR SIR:

10

I write to be left at Carlisle, as you direct me; but you cannot have it. Your letter, dated Sept. 6, was not at this place till this day, Thursday, Sept. 11; and I hope you will be here before this is at Carlisle. However, what you have not going you may have returning; 15 and as I believe I shall not love you less after our interview, it will then be as true as it is now, that I set a very high value upon your friendship, and count your kindness as one of the chief felicities of my life. Do not fancy that an intermission of writing is a 20 decay of kindness. No man is always in a disposition to write: nor has any man at all times something to say.

That distrust that intrudes so often on your mind is a mode of melancholy, which, if it be the business 25 of a wise man to be happy, it is foolish to indulge; and if it be a duty to preserve our faculties entire for their proper use, it is criminal. Suspicion is very often an useless pain. From that and all other pains, I wish you free and safe; for I am, dear Sir,

30

Most affectionately yours,

SAM. JOHNSON.

Ashbourne, Sept. 11, 1777.

TO MRS. THRALE

Lichfield, October 27, 1777.

DEAR MADAM:

You talk of writing and writing, as if you had all the writing to yourself. If our correspondence were  
5 printed, I am sure posterity, for posterity is always the author's favorite, would say that I am a good writer too—*Anch' io sono pittore*. To sit down so often with nothing to say; to say something so often, almost without consciousness of saying, and without any re-  
10 membrance of having said, is a power of which I will not violate my modesty by boasting, but I do not believe that every body has it.

Some, when they write to their friends, are all affection; some are wise and sententious; some strain their  
15 powers for efforts of gaiety; some write news, and some write secrets; but to make a letter without affection, without wisdom, without gaiety, without news, and without a secret, is, doubtless, the great epistolic art.

In a man's letters, you know, Madam, his soul lies  
20 naked, his letters are only the mirror of his breast; whatever passes within him is shown undisguised in its natural process; nothing is inverted, nothing distorted; you see systems in their elements; you discover actions in their motives.

25 Of this great truth, sounded by the knowing to the ignorant, and so echoed by the ignorant to the knowing, what evidence have you now before you! Is not my soul laid open in these veracious pages? Do not you see me reduced to my first principles? This is the  
30 pleasure of corresponding with a friend, where doubt and distrust have no place, and every thing is said as it is thought. The original idea is laid down in its simple purity, and all the supervenient conceptions are spread over it *stratum super stratum*, as they happened  
35 to be formed. These are the letters by which souls are



united, and by which minds naturally in unison move each other as they are moved themselves. I know, dearest Lady, that in the perusal of this, such is the consanguinity of our intellects, you will be touched as I am touched. I have indeed concealed nothing from you, nor do I expect ever to repent of having thus opened my heart.

I am, &c.,

SAM. JOHNSON.

TO JAMES BOSWELL

SIR:

The debate between Dr. Percy and me is one of those 10 foolish controversies which begin upon a question of which neither party cares how it is decided, and which is, nevertheless, continued to acrimony, by the vanity with which every man resists confutation. Dr. Percy's warmth proceeded from a cause which, perhaps, does 15 him more honor than he could have derived from juster criticism. His abhorrence of Pennant proceeded from his opinion that Pennant had wantonly and indecently censured his patron. His anger made him resolve that, for having been once wrong he never should be right. 20 Pennant has much in his notions that I do not like: but still I think him a very intelligent traveler. If Percy is really offended, I am sorry; for he is a man whom I never knew to offend any one. He is a man very willing to learn, and very able to teach; 25 a man out of whose company I never go without having learned something. It is sure that he vexes me sometimes, but I am afraid it is by making me feel my own ignorance. So much extension of mind, and so much minute accuracy of inquiry, if you survey your 30 whole circle of acquaintance, you will find so scarce, if you find it at all, that you will value Percy by comparison. Lord Hailes is somewhat like him: but Lord Hailes does not, perhaps, go beyond him in research; and I do not know that he equals him in elegance.

Percy's attention to poetry has given grace and splendor to his studies of antiquity. A mere antiquarian is a rugged being.

Upon the whole, you see that what I might say in sport or petulance to him, is very consistent with full conviction of his merit.

I am, dear Sir,

Your most, &c.,

April 23, 1778.

SAM. JOHNSON.

TO JAMES ELPHINSTON

10 SIR:

Having myself suffered what you are now suffering, I well know the weight of your distress, how much need you have of comfort, and how little comfort can be given. A loss such as yours lacerates the mind, and  
15 breaks the whole system of purposes and hopes. It leaves a dismal vacuity in life, which affords nothing on which the affections can fix, or to which endeavor may be directed. All this I have known, and it is now, in the vicissitude of things, your turn to know it.

20 But in the condition of mortal things, one must lose another. What would be the wretchedness of life, if there was not something always in view, some Being immutable and unfailing, to whose mercy man may have recourse. *Τὸν πρῶτον κινοῦντα ἀκίνητον.*

25 Here we must rest. The greatest Being is the most benevolent. We must not grieve for the dead as men without hope, because we know that they are in his hands. We have indeed not leisure to grieve long, because we are hastening to follow them. Your race  
30 and mine have been interrupted by many obstacles, but we must humbly hope for an happy end.

I am, Sir,

Your most humble servant,

July 27, 1778.

SAM. JOHNSON.

TO JAMES BOSWELL

DEAR SIR:

I hoped you had got rid of all this hypocrisy of misery. What have you to do with Liberty and Necessity? Or what more than to hold your tongue about it? Do not doubt but I shall be most heartily glad 5 to see you here again, for I love every part about you but your affectation of distress.

I have at last finished my *Lives*, and have laid up for you a load of copy, all out of order, so that it will amuse you a long time to set it right. Come to me, my dear 10 Bozzy, and let us be as happy as we can. We will go again to the Mitre, and talk old times over.

I am, dear Sir,

Yours affectionately,

March 14, 1781.

SAM. JOHNSON. 15

TO MRS. THRALE

London, April 9, 1781.

DEAREST MADAM:

That you are gradually recovering your tranquillity is the effect to be humbly expected from trust in God. Do not represent life as darker than it is. Your loss 20 has been very great, but you retain more than almost any other can hope to possess. You are high in the opinion of mankind; you have children from whom much pleasure may be expected; and that you will find many friends, you have no reason to doubt. Of my 25 friendship, be it worth more or less, I hope you think yourself certain, without much art or care. It will not be easy for me to repay the benefits that I have received; but I hope to be always ready at your call. Our sorrow has different effects; you are withdrawn 30 into solitude, and I am driven into company. I am afraid of thinking what I have lost. I never had such a friend before. Let me have your prayers and those of my dear Queeney.

The prudence and resolution of your design to return so soon to your business and your duty deserves great praise; I shall communicate it on Wednesday to the other executors. Be pleased to let me know whether  
 5 you would have me come to Streatham to receive you, or stay here till the next day. I am, &c.

SAM. JOHNSON.

TO MISS LUCY PORTER, LICHFIELD

DEAR MADAM:

I went away from Lichfield ill, and have had a trouble-  
 10 some time with my breath; for some weeks I have been disordered by a cold, of which I could not get the violence abated, till I had been \*let blood three times. I have not, however, been so bad but that I could have written, and am sorry that I neglected it.

15 My dwelling is but melancholy; both Williams, and Desmoulins, and myself, are very sickly; Frank is not well; and poor Levett died in his bed the other day by a sudden stroke; I suppose not one minute passed between health and death; so uncertain are human things.

20 Such is the appearance of the world about me; I hope your scenes are more cheerful. But whatever befalls us, though it is wise to be serious, it is useless and foolish, and perhaps sinful, to be gloomy. Let us, therefore, keep ourselves as easy as we can; though  
 25 the loss of friends will be felt, and poor Levett had been a faithful adherent for thirty years.

Forgive me, my dear love, the omission of writing; I hope to mend that and my other faults. Let me have your prayers.

30 Make my compliments to Mrs. Cobb, and Miss Adey, and Mr. Pearson, and the whole company of my friends.

I am, my dear,

Your most humble servant,

35 London, March 2, 1782.

SAM. JOHNSON.

TO SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

DEAR SIR:

I heard yesterday of your late disorder, and should think ill of myself if I had heard of it without alarm. I heard likewise of your recovery, which I sincerely wish to be complete and permanent. Your country has 5 been in danger of losing one of its brightest ornaments, and I of losing one of my oldest and kindest friends; but I hope you will still live long, for the honor of the nation; and that more enjoyment of your elegance, your intelligence, and your benevolence, is still reserved 10 for, dear Sir, your most affectionate, &c.,

SAM. JOHNSON.

Brighthelmston,  
Nov. 14, 1782.

TO SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

March 4, 1783. 15

SIR:

I have sent you back Mr. Crabbe's poem, which I read with great delight. It is original, vigorous, and elegant.

The alterations which I have made I do not require 20 him to adopt, for my lines are, perhaps, not often better [than] his own; but he may take mine and his own together, and perhaps between them produce something better than either. He is not to think his copy wantonly defaced; a wet sponge will wash all the red lines away, 25 and leave the pages clean.

His Dedication will be least liked; it were better to contract it into a short, sprightly address. I do not doubt of Mr. Crabbe's success.

I am, Sir,

30

Your most humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

TO MRS. THRALE

London, Nov. 29, 1783.

DEAR MADAM:

The life of my dear, sweet, pretty, lovely, delicious Miss Sophy is safe; let us return thanks to the great  
 5 Giver of existence, and pray that her continuance amongst us may be a blessing to herself and to those that love her. *Multos et felices*, my dear girl.

Now she is recovered, she must write me a little history of her sufferings, and impart her schemes of study  
 10 and improvement. Life, to be worthy of a rational being, must be always in progression; we must always purpose to do more or better than in times past. The mind is enlarged and elevated by mere purposes, though they end as they begin, by airy contemplation. We  
 15 compare and judge, though we do not practise.

She will go back to her arithmetic again; a science which will always delight her more, as by advancing further she discerns more of its use, and a science devoted to Sophy's ease of mind; for you told in the last  
 20 winter that she loved metaphysics more than romances. Her choice is certainly as laudable as it is uncommon; but I would have her like what is good in both.

God bless you and your children; so says,

Dear Madam,

25

Your old Friend,

SAM. JOHNSON.

TO THE REVEREND DR. TAYLOR, ASHBOURNE, DERBYSHIRE

DEAR SIR:

What can be the reason that I hear nothing from you? I hope nothing disables you from writing. What  
 30 I have seen, and what I have felt, gives me reason to fear every thing. Do not omit giving me the comfort of knowing, that after all my losses I have yet a friend left.

I want every comfort. My life is very solitary and very cheerless. Though it has pleased God wonderfully to deliver me from the dropsy, I am yet very weak, and have not passed the door since the 13th of December. I hope for some help from warm weather, which 5 will surely come in time.

I could not have the consent of physicians to go to church yesterday; I therefore received the holy sacrament at home, in the room where I communicated with dear Mrs. Williams, a little before her death. O! my 10 friend, the approach of death is very dreadful. I am afraid to think on that which I know I cannot avoid. It is vain to look round and round for that help which cannot be had. Yet we hope and hope, and fancy that he who has lived to-day may live to-morrow. But let 15 us learn to derive our hope only from God.

In the meantime let us be kind to one another. I have no friend now living but you and Mr. Hector, that was the friend of my youth. Do not neglect, dear Sir,

Yours affectionately, 20

SAM. JOHNSON.

London, Easter Monday,  
April 12, 1784.

TO MISS JANE LANGTON, ROCHESTER

MY DEAREST MISS JENNY:

I am sorry that your pretty letter has been so long 25 without being answered; but, when I am not pretty well, I do not always write plain enough for young ladies. I am glad, my dear, to see that you write so well, and hope that you mind your pen, your book, and your needle, for they are all necessary. Your books 30 will give you knowledge, and make you respected; and your needle will find you useful employment when you do not care to read. When you are a little older, I hope you will be very diligent in learning arithmetic,



Johnson, as described in Boswell's *Tour*, drawn and etched by Trotter. 'He wore,' says Boswell, 'a full suit of plain brown clothes, with twisted hair-buttons of the same color, a large bushy, grayish wig, a plain shirt, black worsted stockings, and silver buckles. Upon this tour, when journeying, he wore boots, and a very wide brown cloth great-coat, with pockets which might have almost held the two volumes of his folio *Dictionary*, and he carried in his hand a large English oak stick.' On the journey the stick was lost.





and, above all, that through your whole life you will carefully say your prayers, and read your Bible.

I am, my dear,

Your most humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

5

May 10, 1784.

TO MRS. THRALE

London, July 8, 1784.

DEAR MADAM:

What you have done, however I may lament it, I  
10 have no pretence to resent, as it has not been injurious  
to me; I therefore breathe out one sigh more of tender-  
ness, perhaps useless, but at least sincere.

I wish that God may grant you every blessing, that  
you may be happy in this world for its short continu-  
15 ance, and eternally happy in a better state; and what-  
ever I can contribute to your happiness I am very ready  
to repay, for that kindness which soothed twenty years  
of a life radically wretched.

Do not think slightly of this advice which I now  
20 presume to offer. Prevail upon Mr. Piozzi to settle in  
England; you may live here with more dignity than  
in Italy, and with more security; your rank will be  
higher, and your fortune more under your own eye.  
I desire not to detail all my own reasons, but every  
25 argument of prudence and interest is for England, and  
only some phantoms of imagination seduce you to Italy.

I am afraid, however, that my counsel is vain, yet  
I have eased my heart by giving it.

When Queen Mary took the resolution of sheltering  
30 herself in England, the Archbishop of St. Andrew's,  
attempting to dissuade her, attended on her journey;  
and when they came to the irremeable stream that  
separated the two kingdoms, walked by her side into

the water, in the middle of which he seized her bridle, and with earnestness proportioned to her danger and his own affection pressed her to return. The Queen went forward.—If the parallel reaches thus far, may it go no further.—The tears stand in my eyes. 5

I am going into Derbyshire, and hope to be followed by your good wishes, for I am, with great affection,

Your, &c.,

SAM. JOHNSON.

Any letters that come for me hither will be sent me. 10

#### TO THE LORD HIGH CHANCELLOR

MY LORD:

After a long and not inattentive observation of mankind, the generosity of your Lordship's offer raises in me not less wonder than gratitude. Bounty, so liberally bestowed, I should gladly receive, if my condition made 15 it necessary; for, to such a mind, who would not be proud to own his obligations? But it has pleased God to restore me to so great a measure of health, that if I should now appropriate so much of a fortune destined to do good, I could not escape from myself 20 the charge of advancing a false claim. My journey to the continent, though I once thought it necessary, was never much encouraged by my physicians; and I was very desirous that your Lordship should be told of it by Sir Joshua Reynolds, as an event very uncertain; 25 for if I grew much better, I should not be willing, if much worse, not able, to migrate. Your Lordship was first solicited without my knowledge; but, when I was told that you were pleased to honor me with your patronage, I did not expect to hear of a refusal; 30 yet, as I have had no long time to brood hope, and have not rioted in imaginary opulence, this cold reception has been scarce a disappointment; and from your

Lordship's kindness I have received a benefit which only men like you are able to bestow. I shall now live *mihi carior*, with a higher opinion of my own merit.

I am, my Lord,

5

Your Lordship's most obliged,

Most grateful, and

Most humble servant,

September, 1784.

SAM. JOHNSON.

TO DR. BURNEY IN ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LEICESTER FIELDS

Mr. Johnson, who came home last night, sends his 10 respects to dear Doctor Burney, and all the dear Burneys, little and great.

Nov. 17, 1784.

## Prayers and Meditations<sup>1</sup>

April 25, 1752.

O LORD, our heavenly Father, almighty and most merciful God, in whose hands are life and death, who givest and takest away, castest down and raisest up, look with mercy on the affliction of thy unworthy servant, turn away thine anger from me, and speak peace to my troubled soul. Grant me the assistance and comfort of thy Holy Spirit, that I may remember with thankfulness the blessings so long enjoyed by me in the society of my departed wife; make me so to think 10 on her precepts and example, that I may imitate whatever was in her life acceptable in thy sight, and avoid all by which she offended Thee. Forgive me, O merciful Lord, all my sins, and enable me to begin and perfect that reformation which I promised her, and to persevere 15 in that resolution which she implored Thee to continue, in the purposes which I recorded in thy sight, when she lay dead before me, in obedience to thy laws, and faith in thy word. And now, O Lord, release me from my sorrow, fill me with just hopes, true faith, and 20 holy consolations, and enable me to do my duty in that state of life to which Thou hast been pleased to call me, without disturbance from fruitless grief, or tumult.

<sup>1</sup> *Prayers and Meditations* is the name of a small book published by Johnson's friend Strahan less than eight months after his death. It contains a curious medley of prayers, memoranda, observations, and resolves, ranging from details of diet and notes on the growth of his nails to the agonized outcry of a penitent soul.

These were written for his own use, without thought of publication, until the last year of his life, when, at his friends' importunity, he consented that they be given to the world. But sickness and death intervened to prevent the intended revision, and they stand as he first wrote them.

tuous imaginations; that in all my thoughts, words, and actions, I may glorify thy Holy Name, and finally obtain, what I hope Thou hast granted to thy departed servant, everlasting joy and felicity, through our Lord  
5 Jesus Christ. Amen.

1758.

EASTER DAY

March 26.

Almighty and most merciful Father, who hast created me to love and to serve Thee, enable me so to partake of the sacrament in which the death of Jesus Christ is  
10 commemorated, that I may henceforward lead a new life in thy faith and fear. Thou, who knowest my frailties and infirmities, strengthen, and support me; grant me thy Holy Spirit, that, after all my lapses, I may now continue steadfast in obedience, that, after  
15 long habits of negligence and sin, I may, at last, work out my salvation with diligence and constancy; purify my thoughts from pollutions, and fix my affections on things eternal. Much of my time past has been lost in sloth; let not what remains, O Lord, be given me in  
20 vain; but let me, from this time, lead a better life, and serve Thee with a quiet mind through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

1759.

Jan. 23.

The day on which my dear mother was buried.

25 Repeated on my fast, with the addition.

Almighty God, merciful Father, in whose hands are life and death, sanctify unto me the sorrow which I now feel. Forgive me whatever I have done unkindly to my mother, and whatever I have omitted to do kindly.  
30 Make me to remember her good precepts and good example, and to reform my life according to thy holy word, that I may lose no more opportunities of good.

I am sorrowful, O Lord; let not my sorrow be without fruit. Let it be followed by holy resolutions, and lasting amendment, that when I shall die like my mother, I may be received to everlasting life.

I commend, O Lord, so far as it may be lawful, into 5 thy hands, the soul of my departed mother, beseeching Thee to grant her whatever is most beneficial to her in her present state.

O Lord, grant me thy Holy Spirit, and have mercy upon me for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen. 10

1767.

Sunday, Oct. 18.

Yesterday, Oct. 17, at about ten in the morning, I took my leave for ever of my dear old friend Catherine Chambers, who came to live with my mother about 1724, and has been but little parted from us since. She 15 buried my father, my brother, and my mother. She is now fifty-eight years old.

I desired all to withdraw, then told her that we were to part for ever; that as Christians, we should part with prayer; and that I would, if she was willing, say 20 a short prayer beside her. She expressed great desire to hear me; and held up her poor hands, as she lay in bed, with great fervor, while I prayed kneeling by her, nearly in the following words:

Almighty and most merciful Father, whose loving 25 kindness is over all thy works, behold, visit, and relieve this thy servant, who is grieved with sickness. Grant that the sense of her weakness may add strength to her faith, and seriousness to her repentance. And grant that by the help of thy Holy Spirit, after the pains 30 and labors of this short life, we may all obtain everlasting happiness, through Jesus Christ our Lord: for whose sake hear our prayers. Amen. Our Father, &c.

I then kissed her. She told me that to part was the

greatest pain that she had ever felt, and that she hoped we should meet again in a better place. I expressed, with swelled eyes, and great emotion of tenderness, the same hopes. We kissed, and parted. I humbly  
5 hope to meet again, and to part no more.

1769.

September 18.

This day completes the sixtieth year of my age. What I have done, and what I have left undone, the unsettled state of my mind makes all endeavors to think im-  
10 proper. I hope to survey my life with more tranquillity, in some part of the time which God shall grant me.

The last year has been wholly spent in a slow progress of recovery. My days are easier, but the per-  
15 turbation of my nights is very distressful. I think to try a lower diet. I have grown fat too fast. My lungs seem encumbered, and my breath fails me, if my strength is in any unusual degree exerted, or my motion accelerated. I seem to myself to bear exercise with more  
20 difficulty than in the last winter. But though I feel all those decays of body, I have made no preparation for the grave. What shall I do to be saved?

Almighty and most merciful Father, I now appear in thy presence, laden with the sins, and accountable  
25 for the mercies of another year. Glory be to Thee, O God, for the mitigation of my troubles, and for the hope of health both of mind and body which Thou hast vouchsafed me. Most merciful Lord, if it seem good unto Thee, compose my mind, and relieve my diseases;  
30 enable me to perform the duties of my station, and so to serve Thee, as that, when my hour of departure from this painful life shall be delayed no longer, I may be received to everlasting happiness, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



1773.

January 1, mane 1h. 33m.

Almighty God, by whose mercy my life has been yet prolonged to another year, grant that thy mercy may not be vain. Let not my years be multiplied to increase my guilt; but as age advances, let me become more 5 pure in my thoughts, more regular in my desires, and more obedient to thy laws. Let not the cares of the world distract me, nor the evils of age overwhelm me. But continue and increase thy loving kindness towards me; and when Thou shalt call me hence, receive me 10 to everlasting happiness, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

1777.

EASTER

9nâ mane.

I went to bed about two, had a disturbed night, though not so distressful as at some other times. 15

Almighty and most merciful Father, who seest all our miseries, and knowest all our necessities, look down upon me, and pity me. Defend me from the violent incursions of evil thoughts, and enable me to form and keep such resolutions as may conduce to the discharge 20 of the duties which thy providence shall appoint me; and so help me by thy Holy Spirit, that my heart may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found, and that I may serve Thee with pure affection and a cheerful mind. Have mercy upon me, O God, have 25 mercy upon me; years and infirmities oppress me, terror and anxiety beset me. Have mercy upon me, my Creator and my Judge. In all dangers protect me, in all perplexities relieve and free me, and so help me by thy Holy Spirit, that I may now so commemorate the death 30 of thy Son our Savior Jesus Christ, as that when this short and painful life shall have an end, I may, for his sake, be received to everlasting happiness. Amen.

1781.

June 22.

Almighty God, who art the giver of all good, enable me to remember with due thankfulness the comforts and advantages which I have enjoyed by the  
5 friendship of Henry Thrale, for whom, so far as is lawful, I humbly implore thy mercy in his present state. O Lord, since Thou hast been pleased to call him from this world, look with mercy on those whom he has left; continue to succor me by such means as  
10 are best for me, and repay to his relations the kindness which I have received from him; protect them in this world from temptations and calamities, and grant them happiness in the world to come, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

15 [The following Prayer was composed and used by Doctor Johnson previous to his receiving the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, on Sunday, December 5, 1784.]

Almighty and most merciful Father, I am now, as to human eyes it seems, about to commemorate, for the  
20 last time, the death of thy Son Jesus Christ our Savior and Redeemer. Grant, O Lord, that my whole hope and confidence may be in his merits, and thy mercy; enforce and accept my imperfect repentance; make this commemoration available to the confirmation of my  
25 faith, the establishment of my hope, and the enlargement of my charity; and make the death of thy Son Jesus Christ effectual to my redemption. Have mercy upon me, and pardon the multitude of my offenses. Bless my friends; have mercy upon all men. Support  
30 me, by the grace of thy Holy Spirit, in the days of weakness, and at the hour of death; and receive me, at my death, to everlasting happiness, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.



## NOTES

The figures in heavy type refer to pages; the others to lines.

### LONDON: A POEM

Only those passages from Juvenal are here quoted of which Johnson's rendering is particularly happy. He adapts many a phrase from Dryden's translation of Juvenal, and from Pope and other poets. Juvenal is more abrupt, concrete, and lively than Johnson; Johnson is usually more general and weighty. There is no better commentary on Johnson's *London* than a folio of Hogarth's pictures.

2. *Thales* is Johnson's friend Savage. Savage did not leave for Wales till fifteen months later, but his departure was for some time anticipated; see pp. 292, 295.

8. *St. David*, patron saint of Wales. This couplet follows Juvenal. He approves his friend's choice,

Vacuis quod sedem figere Cumis  
Destinet atque unum civem donare Sibyllæ.

Cf. Pope's line (*Moral Essays* 3, 394),

And one more Pensioner St. Stephen's gains;  
and Dryden's rendering,

And one more citizen to Sibyl gives.

*Briton*. A popular term ever since the union with Scotland. Cf. ll. 26, 69, 101, 112, 119. Thomson's *Rule Britannia! Britons never shall be slaves* appeared in 1740, and in 1760 George III., in his first speech to Parliament, added to his already great popularity by the sentence: "Born and educated in this country, I glory in the name

of Briton!' (Lecky, *England in the Eighteenth Century*, chap. 9). The term was a favorite with Pope.

9-14. Both Boswell and Dr. Hill have misread these lines as an expression of prejudice against Ireland and Scotland (*Life* l. 130 and n. 1). Johnson's prejudice against Scotland is well known, but could never be inferred from these lines.

14-17. See Hogarth, *Industry and Idleness*, XI. *Four Times of Day—Night; Marriage à la Mode*, I; *Gin Lane*.

21-4. Twenty-five years later Boswell and Johnson spent an interesting day at Greenwich (*Life* l. 457-62). Boswell carried in his pocket a copy of *London*, and read these four lines 'aloud with enthusiasm,' but seems to have drawn no comment from the author.

29. *Masquerades*. The midnight masquerades were popular entertainments throughout the Eighteenth Century, except for short periods when they were repressed. Addison attacked them in *The Spectator* (No. 8, 1711), and Johnson in *The Rambler* (No. 10, 1750). A good contemporary description of one is in *The Guardian* (No. 154, 1713). See also W. C. Sydney, *England and the English in the Eighteenth Century* (l. 144-150).

*Excise*. 'A hateful tax levied upon commodities, and adjudged not by the common judges of property, but wretches hired by those to whom excise is paid' (Johnson's *Dictionary*, 1755). 'A duty charged on home goods, either in the process of their manufacture, or before their sale to the home consumers' (*Encycl. Brit.*). This tax was unpopular from its establishment by the Commonwealth in 1643 throughout the Eighteenth Century. See Burns' *The De'il's awa' with the Exciseman*. Johnson refers to Walpole's attempt to use it five years earlier as a means of relieving the distress that followed the South Sea failures. His policy had been masterly, but popular prejudice against excise was so strong that he had abandoned the measure when it was all but passed, in one of the most striking scenes that ever took place in Parliament. See Lecky, *England in the Eighteenth Century*, chap. 3, for an account of this and a brilliant portrait of Walpole.

30. *English honor.* The increasing trade of Spain and England with the New World (cf. l. 173) had engendered disputes and rivalry that by this time threatened serious consequences. Popular resentment against Spain had grown very high through real and alleged injuries to English sailors, and the clamor for war rose throughout the nation. Walpole's policy was peace, but popular discontent and the Opposition were so strong that war was soon declared, and Walpole's long and brilliant control of the government ended in 1741. In his *Epilogue to the Satires* (1738), Pope, who was twenty years older than Johnson, touched upon the same abuses, and represented England a captive of Vice (151-164).

38. *Science.* 'Learning,' as often in earlier writers.

45. *Osiers.* Johnson loved trees and vegetation; see p. xli. He called them 'The most pleasing part of nature' (*Plan*). 'Were I a rich man, I would propagate all kinds of trees that will grow in the open air' (*Life* 2. 168). Cf. l. 216 and n.

47. *Briton.* Here a 'Celt' or 'Welshman.'

49. *Secret Cell.* When Johnson and Boswell were at St. Andrews, the talk turned upon religious asceticism. 'Mr. Nairne said he had an inclination to retire. I called Dr. Johnson's attention to this that I might hear his opinion if it was right. *Johnson.* "Yes, when he has done his duty to society. In general, as every man is obliged not only to 'love God, but his neighbor as himself,' he must bear his part in active life; yet there are exceptions. . . . Those who cannot resist temptations, and find they make themselves worse by being in the world, without making it better, may retire. I never read of a hermit, but in imagination I kiss his feet; never of a monastery, but I could fall on my knees, and kiss the pavement. But I think putting young people there who know nothing of life, nothing of retirement, is dangerous and wicked. . . . I have thought of retiring, and have talked of it to a friend; but I find my vocation is rather to active life"' (*Life* 5. 62, 3). The same opinion is set forth in chapters 21 and 47 of *Rasselas*.

51. *Pensions.* 'An allowance made to any one without

an equivalent. In England it is generally understood to mean pay given to a state hireling, for treason to his country' (Johnson's *Dictionary*, 1755). Literature had been wisely patronized under Queen Anne, but Walpole and his successors used the pension as a means of corruption; this must have increased Johnson's hatred of patronage. He defines 'pensioner' as 'A slave of state hired by a stipend to obey his master.' Seven years later, after the accession of George III., when Johnson's pension was offered him, he hesitated to accept it, partly on account of these definitions. But Sir Joshua Reynolds assured him they were not applicable to him, and Lord Bute, the Prime Minister, said plainly, 'It is not given you for anything you are to do, but for what you have done.' Thus his hesitation was overcome.

51-6. This 'most spirited invective against tyranny and oppression,' as Boswell calls it, was quite consistent with Johnson's Toryism. From 1722 to 1742 Sir Robert Walpole and the Whigs controlled the government, and maintained a powerful ring by the avoidance of war and a system of ingenious corruption through places, pensions, and the like. It had now continued so long as to become an object of suspicion and fear. What then is more natural than sentiments like these from a Tory in opposition? It is an old saying that a Tory out of place is a Whig. 'Great sums of secret service money were usually expended in direct bribery, and places and pensions were multiplied to such an extent that it is on record that out of 550 members there were in the first Parliament of George I. no less than 271, in the first Parliament of George II., no less than 257, holding offices, pensions, or sinecures. And the body which was thus constituted was rapidly becoming supreme in the State' (Lecky, *England in the Eighteenth Century*, chap. 4).

54. *Pirates*. Spaniards. Spain had justly claimed the right of searching English vessels for violations of the trade-treaty with England, but she was sometimes actually, sometimes supposedly, guilty of violence to English sailors. A notorious case was that of Jenkins, who exhibited in Parliament one of his ears carefully preserved in a box,

which he said had been cut off by Spaniards. It roused the English to tremendous fury against Spain, but there seems to be some doubt whether Jenkins ever lost an ear, or, if he did, that the Spaniards severed it. Johnson refers to the attempts of Walpole in Parliament to explode these rumors and maintain peace.

55. Chesterfield, the enemy of Walpole, says of him: 'He laughed at and ridiculed all notions of public virtue, and the love of one's country, calling them "the chimerical school-boy flights of classical learning"; declaring himself at the same time, "no saint, no Spartan, no reformer." He would frequently ask young fellows, at their first appearance in the world, while their honest hearts were yet untainted: "Well, are you to be an old Roman? a patriot? You will soon come off of that, and grow wiser"' (W. Ernst, *Life of Chesterfield*, p. 246).

58. *Lottery*. With the increase of wealth the instinct for gambling grew strong in the Eighteenth Century and was encouraged by state patronage of lotteries. The Government resorted to this means of raising money: Westminster Bridge was built with the proceeds of a lottery; the collection of manuscripts known as the Harleian and Cottonian were thus purchased for the British Museum; even in America the practice was common, and at Yale College, Connecticut Hall was in part paid for by the same means. The abuses were enormous and thousands of people with limited means were caught in the excitement and ruined. *The Rambler* (Nos. 181, 2) attacks lotteries as *The Tatler* (No. 124) and *The Spectator* (No. 191) had done in somewhat milder tone. See Sydney, *England and the English in the Eighteenth Century* 1. 222-29.

59. *Licensed Stage*. The famous Licensing Act intended to regulate and restrict the stage, especially from attacks on the government, was passed the year before, and was, of course, the work of Walpole. See W. Nicholson, *The Struggle for a Free Stage in London*.

62. The great and sudden increase of wealth in England during the Eighteenth Century was due largely to the development of her colonies.

69. *Who scarce forbear*. Alluding to the episode nar-



rated below, on pp. 266-68. Johnson expressed his contempt for Cibber's verse and George II.'s lack of taste in an epigram:

Great George's acts let tuneful Cibber sing;  
For Nature formed the Poet for the King.  
—(*Life* 1. 149.)

70. *Titled poet*. See below, p. 268: 'Savage did not think any title which was conferred upon Mr. Cibber so honorable as that the usurpation of it could be imputed to him as an instance of very exorbitant vanity.' This leaves no doubt that Savage and Cibber are meant.

72. *Gazetteer*. '1. A writer of news. 2. It was lately a term of the utmost infamy, being usually applied to wretches who were hired to vindicate the Court' (*Dictionary*, 1755). The Court newspaper, the *Gazette*, was proverbially dull. Pope also refers to its editors, *Epilogue to Satires* 2. 226, 7:

All, all but Truth, drops still-born from the press,  
Like the last *Gazette*. . . .

86. *Marlborough*. 'That is now no longer doubted, of which the nation was then first informed, that the war was unnecessarily protracted to fill the pockets of Marlborough, and that it would have been continued without end if he could have continued his annual plunder' (Johnson, *Life of Swift*, §46, cited by Hales).

91. 'His (Johnson's) unjust contempt for foreigners was, indeed, extreme. One evening, at old Slaughter's coffee-house, when a number of them were talking loud about little matters, he said, "Does not this confirm old Meynell's observation—'For anything I see, foreigners are fools'?"' (*Life* 4. 15). 'The prejudices he had to countries did not extend to individuals. . . . In respect to Frenchmen he rather laughed at himself, but it was insurmountable' (Sir Joshua Reynolds in *Misc.* 2. 226).

94. On Frenchmen in London see Hogarth, *Four Times of Day—Noon*; *Rake's Progress II*. The abuse of foreigners, particularly the French, represented a mob senti-

ment; see contemporary accounts in Sydney, *England in the Eighteenth Century* 2. 193.

98. Cf. Juv. 10. 59:

Non possum ferre, Quirites,  
Græcam urbem.

99. *Edward III.*, whose reign, 1327-77, covered the first forty years of the Hundred Years' War against France. He was the brilliant hero at Crecy in 1346, and his son, the Black Prince, at Poitiers in 1356. Johnson selects Edward III. and Henry V. (l. 120) as the best examples of England's former superiority to France. Ten years later, on beginning the *Dictionary*, he playfully used himself as an example: '*Johnson*. "Sir, I have no doubt I can do it in three years." *Adams*. "But the French Academy, which consists of forty members, took forty years to compile their Dictionary." *Johnson*. "Sir, thus it is. This is the proportion. Let me see; forty times forty is sixteen hundred. As three to sixteen hundred, so is the proportion of an Englishman to a Frenchman"' (*Life* l. 186).

104. In 1746 Hogarth in his picture of the *March to Finchley* showed the demoralization of the British soldier in another respect.

115-6. Juvenal has:

Omnia novit,  
Græculus esuriens: in cœlum jusseris, ibit.

Dryden renders,

All things the hungry Greek exactly knows,  
And bld him go to heaven, to heaven he goes.

120. *Henry's victories*. At Agincourt, 1415, and throughout Normandy, 1417-19. Like many a youngster, Johnson may have first learned to 'lisp this tale' from Shakespeare's plays on *Henry IV.* and *Henry V.* In his *General Observations on Shakespeare's Plays* he says: 'None of Shakespeare's plays are more read than the First and Second Parts of *Henry IV.* Perhaps no author has ever in two plays afforded so much delight.' And of Prince Hal: 'When the occasion forces out his latent qualities,

he is great without effort, and brave without tumult. . . . This character is great, original, and just.' When he visited the theatre at Versailles, he playfully proposed that they act '*Harry the Fifth*' (*Misc.* 1. 216).

122. 1st Ed.: *And what their armies lost, their cringes gain.*

131. *Awkward flattery.* Pope has 'awkward vanity' (*Essay on Crit.* 329; 'awkward shame' (*Epil. Sat.* 1. 135); 'awkward pride' (*Mor. Essays* 4. 19). Cf. 'Awkward and supple each devoir to pay' (*Macer* 17).

140-4. In Juvenal (100-104):

Rides, majore cachinno  
Concutitur; fiet, si lacrimas conspexit amici,  
Nec dolet; igniculum brumæ si tempore poscas,  
Accipit endromidem; si dixeris 'æstuo,' sudat.

Which Dryden renders in part (175-179),

Call for a fire, their winter clothes they take;  
Begin you but to shiver and they shake;  
In frost and snow if you complain of heat;  
They rub the unsweating brow, and swear they sweat.

Johnson is more condensed than either.

162. Johnson has omitted Juvenal's reference to the worn-out shoes (149):

Si toga sordidula est et rupta calceus alter  
Pelle patet, vel si consuto vulnere crassum  
Atque recens linum ostendit non una cicatrix?

Dryden (254),

Or. If the shoe be ripped, or patches put,—  
'He's wounded! See the plaster on his foot!'

Johnson must have remembered his own experience at Christ Church College, Oxford, whither he went from Pembroke, to get Bateman's lectures from his friend Taylor, 'till his poverty being so extreme that his shoes were worn out and his feet appeared through them, he saw that this humiliating circumstance was perceived by the Christ Church men, and he came no more. He was too proud to accept of money, and somebody having set a pair of new

shoes at his door, he threw them away with indignation' (*Life* l. 76 f.).

166-9. Cf. *Juv.* 3. 152:

Nil habet infelix paupertas durius in se,  
Quam quod ridiculos homines facit.

177. A fine condensation of Juvenal's:

Haut facile emergunt, quorum virtutibus opstat  
Res angusta domi;

assisted by Dryden's ll. 275, 6,

Rarely they rise by virtue's aid, who lie  
Plunged in the depth of helpless poverty;

and perhaps l. 271,

The poor were wise, who, by the rich oppressed.

182-213. This passage was composed with the eye more on Juvenal than on his own times.

208. On corrupt elections see Hogarth's amusing series of four plates, *The Election*, and note on ll. 51-6.

208-10. Juvenal has (220 ff.):

Melliora ac plura reponit  
Persicus orbis lautissimus et merito jam  
Suspectus, tamquam ipse suas incenderit aedes.

But Johnson is nearer Dryden in sound (359-362):

Childless Arturius, vastly rich before,  
Thus, by his losses, multiplies his store;  
Suspected for accomplice to the fire,  
That burnt his palace but to build it higher.

210-23. On Johnson's view of life in the country see *Adventurer*, No. 102, p. 182, below.

215. *Dungeons of the Strand*. Possibly the dilapidated houses that constituted Butcher's Row, just behind the Church of St. Clement Danes. The space has since been cleared.

216. The love of gardens and gardening, says Lecky, 'forms one of the most remarkable features in the history of national tastes during the first half of the eighteenth

century' (*England in the Eighteenth Century*, chap. 5, near beginning). The formal French and Italian gardening, with precise symmetry and trees fantastically carved, gave way to more natural gardening in Pope's time. See his clever picture in *Moral Essays* 4, and his skit in *The Guardian*, No. 173. Addison also condemns the formal style in *Spectator*, Nos. 414, 477. There are many references to gardening and vegetation throughout both the *Life* and the writings of Johnson. See l. 45, n.

228. 'He told me himself that one night he was attacked in the street by four men, to whom he would not yield, but kept them all at bay till the watch came up, and carried both him and them to the round-house' (*Life* 2. 299). Johnson no doubt had conversation with thieves and beggars, among whom he spent more than one homeless night at this time. Shenstone in 1743, writes that pick-pockets are growing bold enough 'to knock people down with bludgeons in Fleet Street and the Strand, and that at no later hour than eight o'clock at night' (*Life* l. 163, n. 2, cited by Hill). See *Savage*, p. 281.

230. *Heroes*. The notorious 'Mohocks' of Addison's time had now been extinct for ten years, but they had their successors in disorder who bullied the watch, abused pedestrians, and created midnight terror for the unprotected.

232. A reminiscence of Milton (*P.L.* l. 500-2):

When night  
Darkens the streets, then wander forth the sons  
Of Belial, flown with insolence and wine.

242. *Tyburn*. The place of execution, near the present Marble Arch, until 1787. Criminals were carted thither more than two miles from Newgate Prison, and crowds followed the spectacle to its gloomy conclusion. See Hogarth, *Industry and Indolence*, Plate XI. As there were many more than one hundred capital offenses, the executions were frequent. 'In 1732 seventy persons received sentence of death at the Old Bailey.' See Lecky, *England in the Eighteenth Century*, chap. 4, near end. Johnson was one of the great number to plead for a reform of the penal code. See *Rambler*, No. 114.

243. *Fleet*. The abuses on a man-of-war were still so great that the press-gang was a necessary means of manning the fleet. Smollett, who had witnessed them first-hand, paints them vividly in *Roderick Random*. Johnson always had a horror of the life at sea. 'No man will be a sailor who has contrivance enough to get himself into a jail; for being in a ship is being in a jail, with the chance of being drowned.' 'A man in a jail has more room, better food, and commonly better company' (*Life* 1. 348). See passage quoted on p. xxxvi.

247. *Another convoy*. George II. gained no popularity by his frequent visits to Hanover. His English subjects suspected him of using English troops and resources to the advantage of his Hanoverian possessions.

248. *A single goal*. From Juvenal (312 ff.):

Felices proavorum atavos, felicia dicas  
Sæcula, quæ quondam sub regibus atque tribunis  
Viderunt uno contentam carcere Roman.

The stories of money and jewels left untouched in the highway when Alfred was King had created the tradition that his reign was the golden age of England. My colleague, Professor Wardlaw Miles, cites Hearne's *Life of Alfred*, 1709, pp. 114-15, which Johnson doubtless had read. Johnson was always interested in Alfred and in English antiquities. Cf. *Introd.*, p. xl. Some nine years later (1746) 'a favorite object which he had in contemplation' was a *Life of Alfred*, 'in which, from the warmth with which he spoke about it, he would, . . . had he been master of his own will, have engaged himself, rather than on any other subject' (*Life* 1. 177).

251. 1st Ed.: *Sustained the balance, but resigned the sword*.

262, 3. Juvenal (321, 2):

Saturarum ego, ni pudet illas,  
Adjutor gelidos veniam caligatus in agros.

Dryden:

Then to assist your satires, I will come,  
And add new venom when you write of Rome.

## THE VANITY OF HUMAN WISHES

1, 2. Apparently the following quotations all influenced this couplet:

Omnibus in terris, quæ sunt a Gadibus usque  
Auroram et Gangem, pauci dinoscere prosunt  
Vera bona, etc.—JUV. 10. 1, 2.

Look round the habitable world, how few  
Know their own good, or, knowing it, pursue.  
—DRYDEN'S Translation.

The wonders of each region view  
From frozen Lapland to Peru.  
—JENYNS, *Ep. to Lovelace*.

Come, Contemplation, whose unbounded gaze  
Swift in a glance the course of things surveys.  
—SAVAGE, *The Wanderer*.

The couplet has been criticized by Byron as 'heavy and useless,' and by DeQuincey for tautology. Though not tautological, it is labored.

6. *Maze*. From Juvenal's 'bona atque illis multum diversa, remota Erroris nebula.'

10. *Airy*. 'Without reality' (Johnson's *Dict.*), a favorite word.

17-20. These lines anticipate the instances mentioned later in the poem. Villiers, Wentworth, and Hyde, were impeached, and Harley turned out of office. Of these Wentworth and Hyde were good speakers. Johnson probably recalls Denham's *On the Earl of Strafford's Trial and Death*.

18. Juv. 10.9: 'Torrens dicendi; copia multis. Et sua mortifera est facundia.' The Eighteenth Century marked the florescence of English oratory. Within five years Johnson had been writing up the parliamentary debates.

21. *The knowing and the bold*, i.e., the well-instructed, and the courageous and magnanimous (cf. Johnson's *Dict.*) fall victims of the plague of avarice. On the increase of wealth in the Eighteenth Century see *London* 62, n.

31. *Refuse of the sword*. Cf. Addison's *Campaign* 192 (cited by Payne):

The few surviving foes dispersed in flight  
(Refuse of swords, and gleanings of a fight).

34. '*Bonny traitor*' (1st Ed.) shows that Johnson had in mind the supporters of the young Pretender in the famous '45. Johnson used to recite 'with great energy' some verses on the Highland lords who were executed in that attempt (*Life* 1. 180). 'It was a noble attempt' said Johnson in 1777 (*Life* 3. 162). As to his Jacobite sentiments, Boswell is probably right when he says: 'He no doubt had an early attachment to the House of Stuart; but his zeal had cooled as his reason strengthened' (*Life* 1. 430). See Introduction, p. liii.

45, 46. The figure, obscurely expressed, is that of hunting dogs. 'Tainted' means merely 'scented.' Thomson, *Autumn* (1730), 363 ff. (quoted in Johnson's *Dict.*).

The spaniel struck  
Stiff by the tainted gale, with open nose,  
Outstretched and finely sensible, draws full,  
Fearful, and cautious, on the latent prey.

48. *Gaping heir*. 'Alluding to Frederick Prince of Wales' (Payne). He was for many years in violent opposition to his father, but he 'gaped' for the succession in vain, as George II. survived him nine years.

49-58. Democritus, 'the laughing philosopher,' of the Fifth Century B.C. Johnson follows Juv. 10. 34-40. Payne cites Prior (*Democritus and Heraclitus*):

Democritus, dear Droll, revisit earth.

54. *Conceit*. 'Opinion, generally in a sense of contempt; . . . fantastical notion' (Johnson's *Dict.*).

57. *Mock-debate*. Under parliamentary conditions described in *London* 51, note, debate was often perfunctory and superfluous, since the Government had already made up its mind.

58. *Mayor's unwieldy state*. See Hogarth, *Industry and Idleness*, Plate XII.

73-80. It is likely that Johnson's experience of waiting in Chesterfield's outer rooms or being repulsed from his door had taken place shortly before this. See 26. 23, n.

83. See essay on portraits, p. 195.

93, 4. *No more remonstrance rings*. As at the Puritan



Revolution and the Revolution of 1688. For Johnson's opinions on resistance to unjust rule see Introduction, p. liv.

97. *Weekly libels*. See l. 81.

*Septennial ale*. The Septennial Act, lengthening the term of Parliament from three to seven years had been passed in 1716, 'by the instigation of Whiggism' (*Addison*, p. 341). Johnson means the ale that was freely poured out every seven years by candidates during their campaigns. See Hogarth, *Election*, Plate I., one of his most vivid portrayals, where he shows an election dinner in riotous progress at a country inn. In his *Dictionary* under 'septennial,' Johnson quotes this couplet as 'Anonym.'

99. *Full-blown*. Johnson cites in his *Dictionary* Denham's *Sophy*, which may have suggested the epithet here:

My glories are past danger; they're full-blown.

In Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*. Act 3, Sc. 2, Wolsey says:

My high-blown pride at length broke under me.

99-116. These lines are obviously a review of two scenes in Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*.—Act 2, Sc. 4, and Act 3, Sc. 2.

109. *His sovereign frowns*. At his fall occurs this stage direction: 'Exit King, frowning upon Cardinal Wolsey; the Nobles throng after him smiling and whispering.' Wolsey says:

What should this mean?  
What sudden anger's this? How have I reaped it?  
He parted frowning from me, as if ruin  
Leaped from his eyes. . . .

I have touched the highest point of all my greatness;  
I haste now to my setting; I shall fall  
Like a bright exhalation in the evening,  
And no man see me more.

At this point appear certain of the court who insult him;

and at the close of the scene he utters the words which were really spoken on his deathbed:

Had I but served my God with half the zeal  
I served my King, he would not in mine age  
Have left me naked to mine enemies.

114. The canopy is seen in *Henry VIII.*, Act 1, Sc. 4, and in 3. 2. 125 are mentioned

The several parcels of his plate, his treasure,  
Rich stuffs, and ornaments of household.

124. 1st Ed.: *The richest landlord on the banks, etc.*

129. *Villiers*. George Villiers, first Duke of Buckingham, 1628-1687. Favorite and companion of James I. and Charles I. and an infatuated plunger in public affairs. Public rage and fear ended in his assassination. By 'great' Johnson must mean merely 'exalted.'

130. *Harley*. Robert Harley, first Earl of Oxford, 1661-1724. Leader of the Tories 1710-1712; his life was attempted in 1711; he was impeached 1717, and dismissed from Court.

131. *Wentworth*. Sir Thomas Wentworth, first Earl of Strafford, 1593-1641, and Charles I.'s greatest statesman and adviser in his struggle with the Puritans. At the height of the struggle a bill of attainder was passed against him by Parliament, on discovering a Court plot to rescue him, and in fear of the mob Charles consented to it. Accordingly Wentworth was executed.

*Hyde*. Edward Hyde, first Earl of Clarendon, 1609-1674. Royalist, statesman, and chief adviser of Charles II. from 1651, through the Restoration (1660), till 1667, when he fell; pursued by the hatred of Parliament, he fled to France, where he died.

135-164. 'When Dr. Johnson read his own satire, in which the life of a scholar is painted, with the various obstructions thrown in his way to fortune and fame, he burst into a passion of tears one day. The family and Mr. Scott only were present, who, in a jocose way, clapped him on the back, and said: "What's all this, my dear sir? Why, you and I, and Hercules, you know, were all troubled

with melancholy." . . . He was a very large man, however, and made out the triumvirate with Johnson and Hercules comically enough. The Doctor was so delighted at his odd sally, that he suddenly embraced him, and the subject was immediately changed' (*Misc.* 1. 180).

138. At Boswell's instance Johnson had desired him to substitute 'burns' for the earlier reading 'spreads' (cf. l. 139), 'but for perfect authenticity, I now had it done with his own hand. I thought this alteration not only cured the fault, but was more poetical, as it might carry an allusion to the shirt by which Hercules was "inflamed"' (*Life* 3. 358).

139. *Bodley's dome*. The Bodleian Library is the University Library at Oxford. 'Dome' (*domus*) is defined 'a building; a house; a fabric,' in Johnson's *Dict*.

140. *Bacon's mansion*. A cell in an old tower on Folly Bridge, Oxford, said to have been built by Friar (Roger) Bacon in the thirteenth century, and so arranged by his magic art that it would fall on the head of any man more learned than himself who should pass beneath it. It was standing in Johnson's time. Mansion (*mansio, maneo*) is defined 'place of residence; abode; house,' in Johnson's *Dict*.

141-160. Much of this passage is autobiographical. For Johnson's penetrating curiosity, expressed in ll. 143-6, see Introduction. Ll. 147-52 refer to temptations to which he was peculiarly susceptible.

145, 6. From Pope, *Essay on Crit.* 211, 12:

If one right reason drives that cloud away  
Truth breaks upon us with resistless day.

150. 1st Ed.: *And Sloth's bland opiates shed their fumes in vain*.

154. *Melancholy's phantoms*. "I inherited," said he "a vile melancholy from my father, which has made me mad all my life, at least not sober"' (*Life* 5. 215). Less than three years before he died he wrote: 'My health has been, from my twentieth year, such as has seldom afforded me a single day of ease' (*Life* 4. 147). Johnson was a man, however, of enormous muscular strength.

155, 6. When Boswell once observed, apropos of these lines, that 'things were done upon the supposition of happiness,' Johnson answered, 'Alas, Sir, these are all only struggles for happiness. When I first entered Ranelagh, it gave an expansion and gay sensation to my mind, such as I never experienced anywhere else. But, as Xerxes wept when he viewed his immense army, and considered that not one of that great multitude would be alive a hundred years afterwards, so it went to my heart to consider that there was not one in all that brilliant circle, that was not afraid to go home and think; but that the thoughts of each individual there, would be distressing when alone' (*Life* 3. 199).

158. *Pause awhile from letters to be wise.* Johnson ever urged upon scholars and literary men their need of mingling with the world. See pp. xxx, 32; also 129. 3 ff.

160. *Toil, envy, want, etc.* A similar enumerating verse is 76. The stylistic trait is also Juvenal's—'Prætecta, et trabæ, fasces, lectica, tribunal' (10. 35; also 64). *Patron* was submitted for *garret* after Johnson's refusal to dedicate the *Dictionary* to Chesterfield. His definition of 'patron' is, in part, 'commonly a wretch who supports with insolence, and is paid with flattery.'

162. *Tardy bust.* Said to refer to the erection of Milton's bust in the Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey, in 1737; and of Butler's monument (d. 1680) in 1740.

164. *Lydiat.* An English mathematician and Royalist (1572-1646) who was twice imprisoned by the Roundheads and died in misery.

*Galileo.* 1564-1642. For his astronomical discoveries and theories he was attacked continually by the Inquisition for twenty years. In 1633 he became its prisoner for the rest of his life. During this period, however, he was allowed to pursue his studies. He went blind five years before he died.

168. *Laud.* Though a learned man, Archbishop Laud was not preëminent in an age which so excelled in learning as his own. Johnson's high church sentiments are here evident, as well as his resentment against the Puritans, who defied Laud's attempts to enforce liturgical conformity.

More than once the mob rose against him, and once attacked his palace. In 1641 he was imprisoned, his rents 'sequestered' (confiscated), and his palace searched for private papers. He was executed in 1644.

177. *Gazette*. See *London* 72, n.

179. *Greek*. Alexander the Great.

182. *Danube*. Blenheim, the scene of Marlborough's most famous victory (1704) is in the valley of the Danube. He had conducted less brilliant but successful campaigns along the lower Rhine and the Meuse in 1702-3.

185. *Reason frowns*. Johnson often expressed his dislike of war. See Introduction, p. 1. This war of the Spanish Succession (1701-1713) was fought between England, Austria, and Holland, on the one side, and France and Spain, on the other. The subject of dispute was the succession of Philip V., grandson of Louis XIV., to the throne of Spain. The 'single name' may be Marlborough; see *London* 86, n.

But Johnson may now refer also to the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-48) just terminated, which he reviews in ll. 241-54. See notes.

192. *Swedish Charles*. Charles XII., born in 1682. At eighteen he renounced all pleasures and private alliances to devote himself to war against the enemies of Sweden. He expelled the Danes, overran Poland and Saxony, and began his march towards Moscow, but was defeated, after a frightful winter, at Pultowa. For five years he was a refugee in Turkey. He returned to defend Sweden against the powers that planned her dismemberment, and fell while besieging Fredrikshall on the coast of Norway. This portrait of Charles has, with much justice, proved the favorite passage of the poem. Johnson's main outlines were derived from Voltaire's *Histoire de Charles XII*. Johnson once meditated a tragedy on the subject (*Letters* 1. 11).

193. *Frame of adamant*. Voltaire (Book VIII) tells how he slept on the ground in his cloak when others were dying of cold; how he went five days without food or drink, and on the sixth rode six miles without breaking his fast. 'Avec ce corps de fer, gouverné par une âme si hardie et si inébranlable, dans quelque état qu'il pût être

réduit, il n'avait point de voisin auquel il ne fût redoutable.'

195. 1st Ed.: *O'er love, or force, extends*, etc.

200. *One capitulate*. Charles IV., of Denmark. *One resign*. Augustus II. of Poland.

203. *Gothic*. Teutonic, Germanic.

214. *Ladies interpose*. Not mentioned by Voltaire. Johnson may have misunderstood his use of 'serail' designating the Sultan's Court, and taken it to mean 'seraglio.'

*Slaves*. The political intriguers for the death or the release of Charles while in Turkey.

220. *Dubious hand*. It was doubted whether the shot came from the enemy or an assassin. Voltaire does not mention this.

224. *Persia's tyrant; Bavaria's lord*. Xerxes is an example from Juvenal. Charles Albert is a corresponding modern instance. Why Johnson did not content himself with 'Bavaria's lord,' and omit Xerxes, is not clear.

228. *Starves exhausted regions*. *Juv.* 10. 176-8.

Credimus altos

Defecisse amnes epotaque flumina Medo  
Prandente.

229. *Counts his myriads*. Xerxes counted his fighters ten thousand at a time, and found he had more than two million (Herodotus 7. 61 ff.).

232. The reverse of Juvenal; cf. Dryden's version (290):

Who whipped the winds, and made the sea his slave.

'This does very well,' said Johnson, 'when both the winds and the sea are personified, and mentioned by their mythological names, as in Juvenal; but when they are mentioned in plain language, the application of the epithets suggested by me is the most obvious' (*Life* 2. 228). In the *Preface to the Dictionary* he has, however, 'to enchain syllables, and lash the wind' (53.19).

236. *Heap their vallies*. The famous fight of Leonidas and his Spartans in the pass of Thermopylæ.

237-40. *Th' insulted sea, etc.*, Juv. 10. 185, 6:

Sed qualis redit? Nempe una nave, cruentis  
Fluctibus ac tarda per densa cadavera prora.

239-40. Johnson told Mrs. Thrale that this was his favorite couplet of all his own poetry (*Misc.* 2. 422).

241. *Bavarian*. Charles Albert, Elector of Bavaria, who, with little other claim than his ambition, contended with Maria Theresa, Queen of Hungary, for the crown of the Empire in the war of the Austrian Succession (cf. 185 n.). The war involved nearly all Europe. Charles was allied with Frederick the Great, France, Spain, Saxony, and Poland, nearly all of whom violated their previous recognition of Maria Theresa's claim in the Pragmatic Sanction. Hence their legions were treacherously 'unexpected,' and Bohemia at once fell undefended into Charles' hands. The queen at length gained England and Holland as allies, but in her first despair fell back upon the loyalty of Hungary. At Pressburg she called an assembly. Arrayed in Hungarian costume, wearing the crown and the sword, she appeared before her nobles with her infant son in her arms, and appealed to them as her last resource: 'In your hands I lay the daughter and the son of your Kings; they await your succor.' Her beauty and courage were irresistible; they arose and shouted: 'Moriatur *pro rege nostro*, Maria Theresa!' ('Let us die for *our King*, Maria Theresa!'). With her wild but effective band of Hungarians, Croats, and Tyrolese, she overran Bavaria in 1743. Charles got himself hastily crowned Emperor, but was driven from his capital, Munich. The next year he was reinstated, but in 1745 he died, crushed with his struggle, and worn out with pain and disease. His imperial authority was insulted in the year of his death. Cf. Voltaire, *Siècle de Louis XV.*, chap. 14.

246. Cf. Marlowe's *Faustus*, Sc. 14:

Was this the face that launched a thousand ships,  
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?

Doubtless Johnson never read Marlowe.

248. This was one of the most confused, cruel, and apparently futile wars of modern history. Nearly every

participant entered the struggle with the object of stealing territory. Lecky sums up the one year 1744 thus: 'Bohemia, Bavaria, the Austrian Netherlands, and Italy, had been desolated by hostile forces. Tens of thousands of lives had been sacrificed, millions of pounds had been uselessly squandered, all the interests of civilization and industry had been injured or neglected, but it can scarcely be said that a single important result had been achieved' (*England in the Eighteenth Century*, chapter 4, near beginning).

249. *Hussar*. Light Hungarian Cavalry. Hussars were not used in other European armies till later. The word is an adaptation in Hungarian of It. *corsaro*, 'corsair.'

255-310. In *The Rambler*, No. 69, Johnson gives a similar but more inclusive description of the evils of old age.

261-272. In like manner luxurious food and sweet music fail to relieve the wretchedness of Rasselas (chap. 2); cf. 120. 8 ff.

268. 1st Ed.: *And yield the tuneful lenitives*.

291-98. Goldsmith had not forgotten this passage when he wrote *Deserted Village* 97-112; especially the lines:

How happy he who crowns in shades like these  
A youth of labor with an age of ease,  
Who quits a world where strong temptations try,  
And, since 'tis hard to combat, learns to fly!

But on he moves to meet his latter end,  
Angels around befriending Virtue's friend;  
Bends to the grave with unperceived decay,  
While resignation gently slopes the way;  
And, all his prospects brightening to the last,  
His heaven commences ere the world be past.

297. Mrs. Thrale (*Misc.* 1. 151) says this line refers to an incident in the life of Johnson's mother, now nearly eighty years old. 'So excellent was her character, and so blameless her life, that when an oppressive neighbor once endeavored to take from her a little field she possessed, he could persuade no attorney to undertake the cause against a woman so beloved in her narrow circle.'

313. *Lydia's monarch*. Cræsus, to whom, being asked



who is the happiest man, Solon replied: 'You appear to me to be master of immense treasures, and King of many nations; but as relates to what you inquire of me, I cannot say, till I hear you have ended your life happily.' See Herodotus 1. 30-33.

317. *Marlborough*. In 1716 he suffered two strokes of paralysis. 'By these and successive attacks, he has been represented as reduced to a state of absolute debility, both of body and mind; and the Duchess has been accused of leading her infirm and suffering husband into public view, and exposing to the gazing multitudes so pitiful a spectacle of human imbecility' (Coxe, *Memoirs of the Duke of Marlborough*, Bohn ed., 3. 398-9). Coxe mentions Johnson's line, and denies the truth of these rumors. Marlborough lingered till 1722.

318. *Swift*. 'He grew more violent; and his mental powers declined till (1741) it was found necessary that legal guardians should be appointed of his person and fortune. He now lost distinction. His madness was compounded of rage and fatuity. The last face he knew was that of Mrs. Whiteway, and her he ceased to know in a little time. His meat was brought to him cut into mouthfuls; but he would never touch it while the servant staid, and at last, after it had stood perhaps an hour, would eat it walking' (*Lives* 3. 48-9). He afterwards 'sunk into lethargic stupidity, motionless, heedless, and speechless' (*ibid.* 49).

321. *Vane*. Anne Vane, mistress of Frederick, Prince of Wales; cf. 48 n. She died at Bath, where, in spite of desertion and ill health, she had hoped to live more happily than ever before (Hervey, *Memoirs*, vol. 2).

*Sedley*. Catherine Sedley, Countess of Dorchester, mistress of James II., before he came to the throne. The King then with difficulty got rid of her. She afterwards married, and, it was said, made a pious end. Perhaps Johnson had this in mind.

345, 6. Cf. Dryden's rendering, 85, 6:

Some ask for envied power; which public hate  
Pursues and hurries headlong to their fate.

357, 8. 1st Ed.:

*Yet with the sense of sacred presence pressed,  
When strong devotion fills thy glowing breast.*

364. 1st Ed.: *Thinks death*, etc.

#### PROLOGUE AT DRURY LANE

'This year (1747) his old pupil and friend, David Garrick, having become joint patentee and manager of Drury-lane theatre, Johnson honored his opening of it with a Prologue. . . . It was, during the season, often called for by the audience' (*Life* 1. 181).

46. *Hunt* and *Mahomet* were famous performers in these respects. Mahomet, a supposed Turk, had exhibited at the rival theatre, Covent Garden, the previous winter.

52. *The public voice*. A favorite criterion of excellence with Johnson. See *Introd.*, p. xxvii.

#### LETTER TO CHESTERFIELD

"A man goes to a bookseller and gets what he can. We have done with patronage. In the infancy of learning we find some great man praised for it. This diffused it among others. When it becomes general, an author leaves the great and applies to the multitude." *Boswell*. "It is a shame that authors are not now better patronized." *Johnson*. "No, Sir. If learning cannot support a man, if he must sit with his hands across till somebody feeds him, it is, as to him, a bad thing, and it is better as it is. With patronage what flattery! what falsehood! While a man is *in equilibrio*, he throws truth among the multitude, and lets them take it as they please; in patronage he must say what pleases his patron, and it is an equal chance whether that be truth or falsehood" (*Life* 5. 59). At another time (*Life* 2. 10) Johnson remarked thus: 'Why, Sir, I was never near enough to great men to court them. You may be prudently attached to great men, and yet independent. You are not to do what you think wrong; and, Sir, you are to calculate, and not pay too dear for what you get. You must not give a shilling's worth of court

for six-pence worth of good. But if you can get a shilling's worth of good for six-pence worth of court, you are a fool if you do not pay court.'

26. 3. *Proprietor of The World*. Edward Moore, one of Johnson's needy acquaintances during his earlier years in London.

26. 14. '*Le vainqueur*,' etc. 'Boileau, *L'Art Poétique* 3. 272' (Hill).

26. 23. The affront occurred, then, in 1748, the year Johnson wrote *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (cf. l. 160, and note). Sept. 5, O.S., 1748, Chesterfield wrote to the Marquise de Monconseil that he had a boudoir so bright and pleasant that he always received in it such callers as were awkward and uncouth. 'When such an animal is announced I run to my boudoir as to a sanctuary.' In surroundings so cheerful he is sure to be amused rather than depressed by his clumsy visitant.

27. 1. *The shepherd of Virgil*. *Ecl.* 8. 43 ff.

27. 9. *I am solitary*. One of several allusions to the death of his wife; cf. 58. 4, 19; 383, 392.

27. 16. *So little obligation*. See 58. 1 and notes.

The following passages from the *Plan of an English Dictionary* (1747), addressed to Chesterfield are interesting both in themselves, and in comparison with the *Preface*.

To the Right Honorable PHILIP DORMER,  
Earl of CHESTERFIELD,  
One of His Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State.

MY LORD:

When first I undertook to write an *English Dictionary*, I had no expectation of any higher patronage than that of the proprietors of the copy, nor prospect of any other advantage than the price of my labor. I knew that the work in which I engaged is generally considered as drudgery for the blind, as the proper toll of artless industry; a task that requires neither the light of learning, nor the activity of genius, but may be successfully performed without any higher quality than that of bearing burdens with dull patience, and beating the track of the alphabet with sluggish resolution.

Whether this opinion, so long transmitted, and so widely propagated, had its beginning from truth and nature, or from accident and prejudice; whether it be decreed by the authority of reason, or the tyranny of ignorance, that of all the candidates for literary praise, the unhappy lexicographer

holds the lowest place, neither vanity nor interest incited me to inquire. It appeared that the province allotted me was, of all the regions of learning, generally confessed to be the least delightful, that it was believed to produce neither fruits nor flowers; and that, after a long and laborious cultivation, not even the barren laurel had been found upon it.

Yet on this province, my Lord, I entered, with the pleasing hope, that, as it was low, it likewise would be safe. I was drawn forward with the prospect of employment, which, though not splendid, would be useful; and which, though it could not make my life envied, would keep it innocent; which would awaken no passion, engage me in no contention, nor throw in my way any temptation to disturb the quiet of others by censure, or my own by flattery.

I had read indeed of times in which princes and statesmen thought it part of their honor to promote the improvement of their native tongues; and in which dictionaries were written under the protection of greatness. To the patrons of such undertakings I willingly paid the homage of believing that they who were thus solicitous for the perpetuity of their language had reason to expect that their actions would be celebrated by posterity, and that the eloquence which they promoted would be employed in their praise. But I consider such acts of beneficence as prodigies, recorded rather to raise wonder than expectation; and, content with the terms that I had stipulated, had not suffered my imagination to flatter me with any other encouragement, when I found that my design had been thought by your Lordship of importance sufficient to attract your favor.

How far this unexpected distinction can be rated among the happy incidents of life, I am not yet able to determine. Its first effect has been to make me anxious, lest it should fix the attention of the public too much upon me, and, as it once happened to an epic poet of France, by raising the reputation of the attempt, obstruct the reception of the work. I imagine what the world will expect from a scheme prosecuted under your Lordship's influence; and I know that expectation, when her wings are once expanded, easily reaches heights which performance never will attain; and when she has mounted the summit of perfection, derides her follower, who dies in the pursuit.

Not therefore to raise expectation, but to repress it, I here lay before your Lordship the plan of my undertaking, that more may not be demanded than I intend; and that, before it is too far advanced to be thrown into a new method, I may be advertised of its defects or superfluities. Such informations I may justly hope, from the emulation with which those who desire the praise of elegance or discernment must contend in the promotion of a design that you, my Lord, have not thought unworthy to share your attention with treaties and with wars.

In the first attempt to methodize my ideas I found a difficulty which extended itself to the whole work. It was not easy to determine by what rule of distinction the words of this *Dictionary* were to be chosen. The chief intent of it is to preserve the purity, and ascertain the meaning, of our English idiom; and this seems to require nothing more than that our language be considered so far as it is our own; that the words and phrases used in the general intercourse of life, or found in the works of those whom we commonly style polite writers, be selected, without including the terms of particular professions: since, with the arts to which they relate, they are generally derived from other nations, and are very often the same in all the languages of this part of the world. This is, perhaps, the exact and pure idea of a grammatical dictionary; but in lexicography, as in other arts, naked science is too delicate for the purposes of life. The value of a work must be estimated by its use: it is not enough that a dictionary delights the critic, unless, at the same time, it instructs the learner; as it is to little purpose that an engine amuses the philosopher by the subtilty of its mechanism, if it requires so much knowledge in its application as to be of no advantage to the common workman.

The title which I prefix to my work has long conveyed a very miscellaneous idea, and they that take a dictionary into their hands, have been accustomed to expect from it a solution of almost every difficulty. If foreign words therefore were rejected, it could be little regarded, except by critics, or those who aspire to criticism; and however it might enlighten those that write, would be all darkness to them that only read. The unlearned much oftener consult their dictionaries for the meaning of words, than for their structures or formations; and the words that most want exploration, are generally terms of art; which, therefore, experience has taught my predecessors to spread with a kind of pompous luxuriance over their productions.

The academicians of France, indeed, rejected terms of science in their first essay, but found afterwards a necessity of relaxing the rigor of their determination; and, though they would not naturalize them at once by a single act, permitted them by degrees to settle themselves among the natives, with little opposition; and it would surely be no proof of judgment to imitate them in an error which they have now retracted, and deprive the book of its chief use, by scrupulous distinctions.

When all the words are selected and arranged, the first part of the work to be considered is the orthography, which was long vague and uncertain; which at last, when its fluctuation ceased, was in many cases settled but by accident; and in which, according to your Lordship's observation, there is still great uncertainty among the best critics: nor is it

easy to state a rule by which we may decide between custom and reason, or between the equiponderant authorities of writers alike eminent for judgment and accuracy.

The great orthographical contest has long subsisted between etymology and pronunciation. It has been demanded, on one hand, that men should write as they speak; but as it has been shown that this conformity never was attained in any language, and that it is not more easy to persuade men to agree exactly in speaking than in writing, it may be asked with equal propriety, why men do not rather speak as they write. In France, where this controversy was at its greatest height, neither party, however ardent, durst adhere steadily to their own rule; the etymologist was often forced to spell with the people; and the advocate for the authority of pronunciation found it sometimes deviating so capriciously from the received use of writing, that he was constrained to comply with the rule of his adversaries, lest he should lose the end by the means, and be left alone by following the crowd.

When a question of orthography is dubious, that practice has, in my opinion, a claim to preference which preserves the greatest number of radical letters, or seems most to comply with the general custom of our language. But the chief rule which I propose to follow is, to make no innovation, without a reason sufficient to balance the inconvenience of change; and such reasons I do not expect often to find. All change is of itself an evil, which ought not to be hazarded but for evident advantage; and as inconsistency is in every case a mark of weakness, it will add nothing to the reputation of our tongue. There are, indeed, some who despise the inconveniences of confusion, who seem to take pleasure in departing from custom, and to think alteration desirable for its own sake; and the reformation of our orthography, which these writers have attempted, should not pass without its due honors, but that I suppose they hold a singularity its own reward, or may dread the fascination of lavish praise.

Closely connected with orthography is pronunciation, the stability of which is of great importance to the duration of a language, because the first change will naturally begin by corruptions in the living speech. The want of certain rules for the pronunciation of former ages, has made us wholly ignorant of the metrical art of our ancient poets; and since those who study their sentiments regret the loss of their numbers, it is surely time to provide that the harmony of the moderns may be more permanent.

A new pronunciation will make almost a new speech; and therefore, since one great end of this undertaking is to fix the English language, care will be taken to determine the accentuation of all polysyllables by proper authorities, as it

is one of those capricious phenomena which cannot be easily reduced to rules.

When this part of the work is performed, it will be necessary to inquire how our primitives are to be deduced from foreign languages, which may be often very successfully performed by the assistance of our own etymologists. This search will give occasion to many curious disquisitions, and sometimes perhaps to conjectures, which to readers unacquainted with this kind of study, cannot but appear improbable and capricious. But it may be reasonably imagined that what is so much in the power, of men as language, will very often be capriciously conducted. Nor are these disquisitions and conjectures to be considered altogether as wanton sports of wit, or vain shows of learning; our language is well known not to be primitive or self-originated, but to have adopted words of every generation, and, either for the supply of its necessities, or the increase of its copiousness, to have received additions from very distant regions; so that in search of the progenitors of our speech, we may wander from the tropic to the frozen zone, and find some in the valleys of Palestine, and some upon the rocks of Norway.

By tracing in this manner every word to its original and not admitting, but with great caution, any of which no original can be found, we shall secure our language from being overrun with cant, from being crowded with low terms, the spawn of folly or affectation, which arise from no just principles of speech, and of which therefore no legitimate derivation can be shown.

Thus, my Lord, will our language be laid down, distinct in its minutest subdivisions, and resolved into its elemental principles. And who upon this survey can forbear to wish, that these fundamental atoms of our speech might obtain the firmness and immutability of the primogenital and constituent particles of matter, that they might retain their substance while they alter their appearance, and be varied and compounded, yet not destroyed?

But this is a privilege which words are scarcely to expect: for, like their author, when they are not gaining strength, they are generally losing it. Though art may sometimes prolong their duration, it will rarely give them perpetuity; and their changes will be almost always informing us, that language is the work of man, of a being from whom permanence and stability cannot be derived.

The great labor is yet to come, the labor of interpreting these words and phrases with brevity, fullness, and perspicuity; a task of which the extent and intricacy is suffi-

ciently shown by the miscarriage of those who have generally attempted it. This difficulty is increased by the necessity of explaining the words in the same language; for there is often only one word for one idea; and though it be easy to translate the words *bright, sweet, salt, bitter*, into another language, it is not easy to explain them.

I know well, my Lord, how trifling many of these remarks will appear separately considered, and how easily they may give occasion to the contemptuous merriment of sportive idleness, and the gloomy censures of arrogant stupidity; but dullness it is easy to despise, and laughter it is easy to repay. I shall not be solicitous what is thought of my work by such as know not the difficulty or importance of philological studies; nor shall think those that have done nothing qualified to condemn me for doing little. It may not, however, be improper to remind them, that no terrestrial greatness is more than an aggregate of little things; and to inculcate, after the Arabian proverb, that drops, added to drops, constitute the ocean.

Of antiquated or obsolete words, none will be inserted but such as are to be found in authors who wrote since the accession of Elizabeth, from which we date the golden age of our language; and of these many might be omitted, but that the reader may require, with an appearance of reason, that no difficulty should be left unresolved in books which he finds himself invited to read, as confessed and established models of style. These will be likewise pointed out by some note of exclusion, but not of disgrace.

The words which are found only in particular books, will be known by the single name of him that has used them; but such will be omitted, unless either their propriety, elegance, or force, or the reputation of their authors, affords some extraordinary reason for their reception.

Words used in burlesques and familiar compositions, will be likewise mentioned with their proper authorities; such as *dudgeon*, from Butler, and *leasing* from Prior; and will be diligently characterized by marks of distinction.

Barbarous or impure words and expressions, may be branded with some note of infamy, as they are carefully to be eradicated wherever they are found; and they occur too frequently even in the best writers: as in Pope,

—————*in endless error hurl'd.*  
*'Tis these that early taint the female soul.*

in Addison,

Attend to what a *lesser* muse indites.

and in Dryden,

A dreadful quiet felt, and *worser* far  
 Than arms——



If this part of the work can be well performed, it will be equivalent to the proposal made by Boileau to the academicians, that they should review all their polite writers, and correct such impurities as might be found in them, that their authority might not contribute, at any distant time, to the deprivation of the language.

With regard to questions of purity, or propriety, I was once in doubt whether I should not attribute too much to myself, in attempting to decide them, and whether my province was to extend beyond the proposition of the question, and the display of the suffrages on each side; but I have been since determined, by your Lordship's opinion, to interpose my own judgment, and shall therefore endeavor to support what appears to me most consonant to grammar and reason. Ausonius thought that modesty forbade him to plead inability for a talk to which Cæsar had judged him equal.

Cur me posse negem posse quod ille putat?

And I may hope, my Lord, that since you, whose authority in our language is so generally acknowledged, have commissioned me to declare my own opinion, I shall be considered as exercising a kind of vicarious jurisdiction, and that the power which might have been denied to my own claim, will be readily allowed me as the delegate of your Lordship.

In citing authorities, on which the credit of every part of this work must depend, it will be proper to observe some obvious rules; such as of preferring writers of the first reputation to those of an inferior rank; of noting the quotations with accuracy; and of selecting, when it can be conveniently done, such sentences, as, besides their immediate use, may give pleasure or instruction, by conveying some elegance of language, or some precept of prudence, or piety.

It has been asked on some occasions, who shall judge the judges? And since, with regard to this design, a question may arise by what authority the authorities are selected, it is necessary to obviate it, by declaring that many of the writers whose testimonies will be alleged, were selected by Mr. Pope; of whom, I may be justified in affirming, that were he still alive, solicitous as he was for the success of this work, he would not be displeased that I have undertaken it.

This, my Lord, is my idea of an *English Dictionary*; a dictionary by which the pronunciation of our language may be fixed, and its attainment facilitated; by which its purity may be preserved, its use ascertained, and its duration lengthened. And though, perhaps, to correct the language of nations by books of grammar, and amend their manners by discourses of morality, may be tasks equally difficult; yet, as it is unavoidable to wish, it is natural likewise to hope, that your Lordship's patronage may not be wholly lost; that it may contribute to the preservation of ancient, and the improvement

of modern writers; that it may promote the reformation of those translators, who, for want of understanding the characteristic difference of tongues, have formed a chaotic dialect of heterogeneous phrases; and awaken to the care of purer diction some men of genius, whose attention to argument makes them negligent of style, or whose rapid imagination, like the Peruvian torrents, when it brings down gold, mingles it with sand.

When I survey the Plan which I have laid before you, I cannot, my Lord, but confess, that I am frightened at its extent, and like the soldiers of *Cæsar*, look on *Britain* as a new world, which it is almost madness to invade. But I hope that though I should not complete the conquest, I shall at least discover the coast, civilize part of the inhabitants, and make it easy for some other adventurer to proceed farther, to reduce them wholly to subjection, and settle them under laws.

We are taught by the great Roman orator, that every man should propose to himself the highest degree of excellence, but that he may stop with honor at the second or third: though therefore my performance should fall below the excellence of other dictionaries, I may obtain, at least, the praise of having endeavored well; nor shall I think it any reproach to my diligence, that I have retired without a triumph, from a contest with united academies, and long successions of learned compilers. I cannot hope, in the warmest moments, to preserve so much caution through so long a work as not often to sink into negligence, or to obtain so much knowledge of all its parts, as not frequently to fall by ignorance. I expect that sometimes the desire of accuracy will urge me to superfluities, and sometimes the fear of prolixity betray me to omissions: that in the extent of such variety I shall be often bewildered; and in the mazes of such intricacy be frequently entangled; that in one part refinement will be subtilized beyond exactness, and evidence dilated in another beyond perspicuity. Yet I do not despair of approbation from those who, knowing the uncertainty of conjecture, the scantiness of knowledge, the fallibility of memory, and the unsteadiness of attention, can compare the causes of error with the means of avoiding it, and the extent of art with the capacity of man; and whatever be the event of my endeavors, I shall not easily regret an attempt which has procured me the honor of appearing thus publicly,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient,  
and most humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

## PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH DICTIONARY

29. 8. *Writer of dictionaries.* In the *Dictionary* Johnson defines *lexicographer* 'a writer of dictionaries, a harmless drudge'; and *Grubstreet* 'originally the name of a

street . . . much inhabited by writers of small histories, dictionaries, and temporary poems.' In *Adventurer* 39 he mentions 'the low drudgery of collating copies, comparing authorities, digesting dictionaries, or accumulating compilations.'

30. 31 ff. In the following criticism Johnson approaches a conception of etymology that is now fundamental in the science. The history of the language is primarily the history of the *spoken*, not of the *written* language; 'it is a record of the facts that did happen, not a fabric, of conjectures as to what may have happened' (J. A. H. Murray, *Evolution of English Lexicography*, p. 44).

31. 19. *The derivatives length*, etc. The history of the *spoken* language shows that the forms here cited as anomalous, are not so, but the natural result of common processes like umlaut, analogy, or the regular influence of certain consonants upon certain vowels. Instead of 'showing little regard' for phonology, 'in the deduction of one language from another,' etymologists have found it of chief importance in their science.

31. 22. *Highth*. This form is etymologically correct. It was still common in the South of England in Milton's time.

'Quid te juvat [or levat] spinis de pluribus una?'  
—HORACE, *Ep.* 2. 212.

—Will you think, my friend, your business done,  
When of a hundred thorns you pull out one?  
—POPE, *Imitation of Ep.* 2, l. 320, 1.

32. 12. *We had dominions in France*, with a touch of Johnson's stout patriotism. If he refers to the late Thirteenth and the Fourteenth Century he is right, for during that time, and not just after the Norman Conquest, came the largest borrowing from the French. The chief borrowings from the Latin liturgy came long before the Conquest.

33. 24. *Hooker*. 'Alteration, though it be from worse to better, hath in it inconveniences' (*Ecclesiastical Polity* 4. 14. 1).

34. 4. *Science*. See *London* 38, n.

35. 11. *Languages*. That is, 'groups of languages.'

**35. 26. Junius.** Francis Junius, or Du Jon, 1589-1677, a studious pioneer in the field of Teutonic languages, especially Old English. His *Etymologicum Anglicanum*, which Johnson used, was first printed in 1743 by Lye, afterwards a member of the Literary Club.

*Skinner* (1623-1667). His etymological studies were published in 1671 as the *Etymologicon Linguae Anglicanae*, which Johnson used.

**35. 35. Northern languages.** 'Teutonic'; cf. 'northern Muses,' **36. 8**; 'northern learning,' **48. 18**.

**36. 19.** I have here omitted a long note in which Johnson cites from Junius 'a few specimens of his etymological extravagance.'

**37. 1. To collect the words.** In three important respects Johnson improved upon predecessors—in his great extension of the word-list, his use of illustrative quotations, skilfully and copiously gathered from his enormous reading, and his expert technique in framing definitions. Cf. also **42. 21 ff.**, and note.

**37. 10. Common or appellative,** i. e., not including proper nouns.

**39. 32. Bailey.** His *Universal Etymological English Dictionary*, 1721, was the common authority till Johnson's book appeared. It made some attempt at etymology, and, in a later edition, indicated pronunciation. It was Johnson's chief help in compiling a word-list.

*Ainsworth.* Johnson refers to his *Latin-English Dictionary*, 1743.

*Philips.* Edward Phillips, nephew and pupil of Milton. Johnson refers to his *New World of Words*, 1658.

**42. 1. This confession.** 'A lady once asked him how he came to define *Pastern* the *Knee* of a horse; instead of making an elaborate defense, as she expected, he at once answered, "Ignorance, Madam, pure ignorance"' (*Life* 1. 293).

**42. 2. Tully.** *Laws* 2. 23. 59.

**42. 4. Aristotle.** *Poetics* 25. 9, commenting upon *Il.* 10. 84. The question is not yet finally answered, judging from the definition in *Liddell and Scott*.

**42. 21 ff.** This attempt at historical order of meanings

was one of the most significant that Johnson made in lexicography. He was, of course, much handicapped by the necessity of going back not further than Sidney, and by the undeveloped state of the history of literature. The *New English Dictionary* is a realization of his dream.

43. 22. *Ardor*, 'fierce or burning heat; *concr.* fire, flame' (*N. E. D.*, with quotations from 1645 to 1814, including one from 1755).

43. 23. *Flagrant*, 'blazing, burning' (*N. E. D.*, with quotations from 1513 to 1856).

44. 20. *Fit*, 'a paroxysm or exacerbation of any intermittent distemper' (Johnson's *Dict.*). But where he uses a hard word in defining, he nearly always adds a paraphrase admirable for its directness and simplicity, and many a definition in the *N. E. D.* is quoted from him or adapted with slight change.

45. 15. *Verdure and flowers*. A favorite figure; cf. *London* 45, n.

46. 4. *Tenderness of friendship*. 'Soon after the publication of his Dictionary, Garrick being asked by Johnson what people said of it, told him that, among other animadversions, it was objected that he cited authorities which were beneath the dignity of such a work, and mentioned Richardson. "Nay," said Johnson, "I have done worse than that; I have cited *thee*, David"' (*Life* 4. 4). Hill (*Life* 4. 4, n. 3) mentions Mrs. Lennox and Beattie as other friends quoted. *Clarissa* is not infrequently cited, and in the fourth edition (1773) are numerous quotations from Reynolds. Johnson sometimes quotes from himself; see *Vanity* 97, n.

46. 10. '*Wells of English undefiled*.' 'Dan Chaucer, well of English undefiled' (Spenser, *Faery Queen* 4. 2. 32. 8).

46. 25 ff. This preference of Elizabethan English is not mere antiquarianism in Johnson. He felt its strength, flexibility, and permanence as a medium of expression; and though his own style at its best is not superficially Elizabethan, it exemplifies certain virtues of the language at that time, especially its vigor and uniformity.

48. 34. *Alleged*, 'cited, quoted,' a meaning not given in Johnson's *Dict.*

48. 36. *Memory*. 'His memory was so tenacious that he never forgot anything that he either heard or read. Mr. Hector [Johnson's schoolmate] remembers having recited to him eighteen verses, which, after a little pause, he repeated *verbatim*, varying only one epithet, by which he improved the line' (*Life* l. 48). Many illustrations of his powers of memory occur in *Boswell*, and the frequent inaccuracies of reference or quotation are after all slight, and but show the extent to which he trusted these powers.

49. 7 ff. Johnson's idealism never found nobler expression than in this paragraph.

49. 18. *Northern learning*. For Johnson's interest in 'northern antiquities,' see p. xl.; *London* 248, n.

49. 31. These *Dreams of a poet*. The dreams also of Diderot as he conceived the famous *Encyclopædia*; and they were in large part realized. 'It has been often told how Diderot himself used to visit the workshops, to watch the men at work, to put a thousand questions, to sit down at the loom, to have the machine pulled to pieces and set together again before his eyes, to slave like any apprentice, and to do bad work, in order, as he says, to be able to instruct others how to do good work. That was no movement of empty rhetoric which made him cry out for the *Encyclopædia* to become a sanctuary in which human knowledge might find shelter against time and revolutions. He actually took the pains to make it a complete storehouse of the arts, so perfect in detail that they could be at once reconstructed after a deluge in which everything had perished save a single copy of the *Encyclopædia*' (J. Morley, *Diderot* l. 194).

50. 25. *School philosophy*. The university course in liberal arts; cf. Johnson's definitions of *school*, *philosophy*, and *science*.

51. 23. *Academicians della Crusca*. The Academia della Crusca ('of the bran') had as its principal object the sifting and purification of the Italian language. It was the most illustrious of the Italian literary academies that, in the Sixteenth Century, sprang from humanism. Its great work was the *Vocabulario della Crusca*, 1613.

51. 25. *Buonaroti* (1568-1646). Michelangelo the

Younger, nephew to the great painter, whose sonnets he edited. He took part in compiling the Academy's dictionary. The comedies here mentioned represent five days at a fair, and exhibit men from many industries and walks in life, together with allegorical figures of Art, Commerce, etc.

52. 28. *Dome of a temple*. For Johnson's interest in architecture see p. xlv.; 76. 31 n.

52. 35. *Fix our language*. See the above citations from his *Plan*, written eight years earlier, especially the close. In *Rambler* 208 (1752) he says: 'I have labored to refine our language to grammatical purity, and to clear it from colloquial barbarisms, licentious idioms, and irregular combinations. Something, perhaps, I have added to the elegance of its construction, and something to the harmony of its cadence. When common words were less pleasing to the ear, or less distinct in their signification, I have familiarized the terms of philosophy, by applying them to popular ideas, but have rarely admitted any word not authorized by former writers; for I believe that whoever knows the English tongue in its present extent, will be able to express his thoughts without further help from other nations.'

53. 19. *Enchain syllables*. A reminiscence of *Vanity of Human Wishes* 232: 'The waves he lashes, and enchains the wind'; see note.

53. 24. *Father Paul*. One of Johnson's first literary proposals in London (1737) was a translation from Italian of Father Paul Sarpi's *History of the Council of Trent*. He was also to translate Courayer's notes in his French version of 1736. Amelot's version appeared in 1683.

53. 27. Boccaccio died in 1375, Machiavelli in 1527, and Caro, poet and translator, about 1566.

55. 15. *Swift in his petty treatise*. A proposal for *Correcting, Improving, and Ascertaining the English Tongue*, 1712.

56. 6. An English Academy had been the hope of Roscommon, Dryden, and Swift. Johnson's protest against it was sincere and characteristic. He says (*Life of Roscommon*, *Lives* 1. 233): 'In this country an academy could be expected to do but little. . . . Unanimity is impossible, and debate would separate the assembly.' And again: 'The

edicts of an English academy would probably be read by many, only that they might be sure to disobey them. That our language is in perpetual danger of corruption cannot be denied; but what prevention can be found? The present manners of the nation would deride authority, and therefore nothing is left but that every writer should criticize himself.'

56. 13. *Babble a dialect of France*. Cf. *London* 91-131, and notes.

56. 33. *The day that was passing over me*. Cf. *Dan*. 4. 16.

58. 1. *Patronage of the great*. Referring to the Chesterfield episode. When Vaugelas, editor of the French Academy's dictionary, thanked his patron Richelieu for his pension, the cardinal said: 'Well, Monsieur, you will not forget the word "pension" in your dictionary.' 'No, Monseigneur,' was the reply, 'and still less the word "gratitude."' Cf. Johnson's definition of 'pension,' *London* 51, n.

58. 13. Beni had attacked the *Accademia della Crusca's* dictionary for basing itself upon Tuscan usage and standards. In later editions it was altered in this respect.

58. 14. *Fifty years*. The French dictionary was begun in 1639 and published in 1694; cf. the anecdote, *Life* 1. 186.

#### THE RAMBLER, THE ADVENTURER, AND THE IDLER

61. Murphy says this paper was occasioned by the popularity of *Roderick Random* (1748) and *Tom Jones* (1749). Richardson's *Pamela* and *Clarissa* had appeared. Johnson much preferred Richardson. He was an author 'who has enlarged the knowledge of human nature, and taught the passions to move at the command of virtue' (*Rambler* 97). In comparing the two he said: 'There is as great a difference between them as between a man who knew how a watch was made (Richardson), and a man who could tell the hour by looking on the dial-plate' (*Life* 2. 49). "'Sir, there is more knowledge of the heart in one letter of Richardson's than in all *Tom Jones*. . . . If you were to read Richardson for the story, your impatience would be so much fretted that you would hang yourself. But you must read



him for the sentiment, and consider the story as only giving occasion to the sentiment” (2. 174).

61. 13. *Heroic romance*. Bishop Percy says: ‘When a boy he was immoderately fond of reading romances of chivalry, and he retained his fondness for them through life; so that spending a part of a summer (1764) at my parsonage house in the country, he chose for his regular reading the old Spanish romance of *Feliarmarte of Hircania*, in folio, which he read quite through. Yet I have heard him attribute to these extravagant fictions that unsettled turn of mind which prevented his ever fixing in any profession’ (*Life* 1. 49). He read also *Don Bellianis* and *Il Palmerino d’ Inghelterra* (*Life* 3. 2). Addison has a bantering paragraph on these extravagant stories in *Spectator* 99.

61. 18. *Scaliger*. Speaking of Pontanus (1426-1503), sometimes ranked as the best Latin poet of his time, Scaliger says (*Poetics* 5. 4, s. v. *Pontanus*) that his poem on *Tombs* is almost entirely made of words like roses, violets, lilies, beauty, spring, Pallas, Venus, Grace, tears, myrrh, muses, Aganippe, Pierian, etc., to the point of disgusting his reader.

62. 14. *General converse and acute observation*. Qualifications to literary performance upon which Johnson insisted again and again. See 256. 5 ff., and notes; p. xxx.

62. 16. *Plus oneris*. Horace (*Ep.* 2. 1. 170) is speaking of comedy, which is commonly supposed to be an easy literary form, because its matter is drawn from daily life; but for that reason it is really more difficult and therefore is less indulged by its critics.

62. 24. *Apelles*. The most famous painter of ancient times. Pliny (*Nat. Hist.* 35. 79 ff.) says, when he exhibited his pictures in public, he, ‘concealed behind the picture, would listen to the criticisms that were passed upon it. . . . It was under these circumstances, they say, that he was censured by a shoemaker for having represented the shoes with one shoestring too small. The next day, the shoemaker, quite proud at seeing the former error corrected, thanks to his advice, began to criticize the leg; upon which Apelles, full of indignation, popped his head out, and reminded him that a shoemaker should give no opinion be-

yond the shoes'; whence the proverb, 'Let the shoemaker stick to his last.'

66. 5. *Confound the colors of right and wrong.* Johnson often rebuked this sophistry of his times. 'But if he does really think that there is no distinction between virtue and vice, why, Sir, when he leaves our houses, let us count our spoons' (*Life* 1. 432).

66. 22. *Roman tyrant.* Caligula, who in his violent excesses often exclaimed, in the words of the lost tragedy, *Atreus*, 'Oderint, dum metuant!' (Suetonius, *Caligula* 30; cf. *Tiberius* 59).

67, motto. *Elphinston.* See 383. 11, and note. He translated over thirty Latin mottoes for *The Rambler*.

68. 3. *Fall.* This transitive use of the word with 'price,' 'value,' etc., was almost confined to the eighteenth century.

68. 29. *Every budding flower.* See *London* 45, n.

69. 13. *Something wrong.* Johnson was often forced into society by his own unbearable melancholy.

70. 29. *Chemists.* Johnson was a dabbler in chemistry, and used to try experiments in his own room, and at the Thrals', where, according to Mrs. Piozzi, he was once nearly burned up in the laboratory he had improvised (*Misc.* 1. 307); cf. p. xxxix.

71. 22. *Milton . . . to a learned stranger.* He wrote thus to Emeric Bigot in 1658. See J. Hall, *Milton's Familiar Letters*, p. 85.

74. 19. *Writings are not confirmed by his life.* 'Lady Macleod objected that the author does not practise what he teaches. *Johnson.* "I cannot help that, Madam. That does not make his book the worse. People are influenced more by what a man says, if his practice is suitable to it—because they are blockheads. The more intellectual people are, the readier will they attend to what a man tells them. If it is just, they will follow it, be his practice what it will. No man practises so well as he writes. I have all my life long been lying till noon; yet I tell all young men, and tell them with great sincerity, that nobody who does not rise early will ever do any good"' (*Life* 5. 210). 'Sir, are you so grossly ignorant of human nature, as not to know that a man may be very sincere in good principles,

without having good practices' (*ibid.* 359). See 265. 12 ff.

75. 4. 'Works and Things Impossible, or at least not yet discovered, are propounded according as they fall under the several titles. And along with them those discoveries of which man is already possessed, which are nearest and most akin to such impossibles; that men's industry may be excited and their spirits encouraged' (Bacon, *Norma* prefaced to the *Historia Naturalis et Experimentalis*, which begins with the *Historia Ventorum*; *Works*, ed. Spedding, Ellis, and Heath 9. 377). Accordingly Bacon proposes (*Works* 9. 464) as a *desideratum* 'a method of foreknowing the risings, fallings and times of the winds; a thing useful in navigation and agriculture, but especially so in selecting the times for naval engagements.' In his 'approximation' he says: 'Now, that the cause of the winds is explained, the more diligent observations of posterity (if it shall care at all about these things) will discover more certain prognostics.'

75. 14. *Hale*. 'From the first time that the impressions of religion settled deeply in his mind, he used great caution to conceal it; not only in obedience to the rules given by our Savior of fasting, praying, and giving alms in secret, but from a particular distrust he had of himself, for he said he was arraid he should at some time or other do some enormous thing, which, if he were looked on as a very religious man, might cast a reproach on the profession of it, and give great advantages to impious men, to blaspheme the name of God' (G. Burnet, *Life and Death of Sir Matthew Hale*, London, 1700, p. 74). Johnson cites this little masterpiece of biography again at 91. 27.

76. 31. *A distant prospect*. Over a year before this date Johnson had spent some time at Hampstead. His simile here may well be a recollection of the view of London from the hill. *The Vanity of Human Wishes* was in large part written there. Architectural grandeur appealed strongly to Johnson; see p. xlv.; 52. 28; 132. 2; 137. 36; 200. 9; 250. 19-22.

77, motto. '*Multis dicendi.*' For a fine paraphrase see *Vanity of Human Wishes* 17, 18. Johnson, as usual,

quotes from memory. Juvenal has, 'torrens dicendi copia multis.'

82. 7. This essay was written near his forty-first birthday. On his twenty-seventh birthday he prayed: 'Mayest thou, O God, enable me for Jesus Christ's sake to spend this in such a manner that I may receive comfort from it at the hour of death.' On New Year's day of his thirty-sixth year: 'Let me remember, my God, that as days and years pass over me, I approach nearer to the grave where there is no repentance.' In 1778 he said: 'I value myself upon this, that there is nothing of the old man in my conversation. I am now sixty-eight, and I have no more of it than at twenty-eight.'

85. 15. *Dictates*. *Rambler* 87 discusses *The Reasons why Advice is generally ineffectual*.

87. 19. *Imperial tragedy*. The epithet is suggested by Milton's 'gorgeous Tragedy, In sceptred pall,' *Pens.* 97, 8. Johnson uses it again in the *Preface to Shakespeare*; see *supra*, p. xlv.

88. 12. 'Parva si non cotidie fiant' (Pliny, *Ep.* 3. 1. 3).

88. 17. *I have often thought*. The same idea is expressed by Goldsmith in the opening of his *Life of Nash*.

89. 24. *Account of Thuanus*. Perhaps Johnson refers to an account in the *Bibliotheca Politico-heraldica Selecta*, by Charles Arndius, Rostock and Leipzig, 1707, which I have not seen.

89. 35. *Sallust*. 'Citius modo, modo tardus, incessus' (*Conspiracy of Catiline* 15. 5).

90. 2. *Melancthon*. He so hated dilatoriness in business that 'semper momentum horæ juberet nominari,' and had slight opinion of a man who made an engagement for some time about, say, two or three o'clock (*Camerarius, Vita Melanchthonis*, Halle, 1777, p. 62, §17). This *Life* by Melancthon's friend contained many of 'the invisible circumstances' so prized by Johnson.

90. 27. *Tickell*. See his *Life of Addison* usually prefixed to Addison's *Works*; also in Collins' *Critical Essays and Literary Fragments*, in *An English Garner*, p. 220.

90. 30. *Life of Malherb*. By Racan. 'Il ne falloit qu'une femme lascive pour pervertir le sang de Charlemagne

et de Saint Louys, et que tel qui se pensoit estre issu d'un de ces grands héros, estoit peut estre venu d'un valcy de chambre ou d'un violon' (*Œuvres de Racan, Bibliothèque Elzévirienne*, l. 270). The other opinion occurs *ibid.* l. 285. Beggars in asking alms, said, 'Noble gentilhomme.'

91. 27. *Hale*. Cf. 75. 14, n. On entering into office Hale drew up a list of 'things necessary to be continually had in remembrance.' One was, 'in business capital, though my nature prompt me to pity, yet to consider that there is also a pity due to the country' (Burnet's *Life and Death of Hale*, p. 31).

91. 31. This paper seems to have been especially treasured by Boswell. He quotes at length from it in describing his intention at the opening of his *Life of Johnson*, and no doubt it served as a guide and stimulus to him throughout the years which he spent in gathering materials for his book.

92. 8. *Important by their frequency*. An allusion to Pliny; see 88. 12.

92. 12. *Draught of life*. Perhaps Johnson recalls Rochester's *Letters from Artemisia*, 'make the nauseous draught of life go down.'

92. 20. *Balm of being*. Allusion to *Paradise Lost* ll. 542-6:

And for the air of youth,  
Hopeful and cheerful, in thy blood will reign  
A melancholy damp of cold and dry,  
To weigh thy spirits down, and last consume  
The balm of life.

92. 22. *Verdure and flowers*; see *London* 45, n. and p. xli.

95. 19. *Generally degraded*. Here and throughout the essay there is implied a contempt for mere popularity and for the man who is merely popular. 'A man will please more upon the whole by negative qualities than by positive; by never offending, than by giving a great deal of delight' (*Life* 3. 149). In his *Life of Waller* he speaks of that 'dull good nature, such as excites rather tenderness than esteem, and such as, though always treated with kindness, is never honored or admired.' See 159. 29, where he says: 'I question whether some abatement of character is not necessary to general acceptance.'

96. 15. *Philomides*, 'laughter-loving,' Homer's epithet of Aphrodite.

On Johnson as a good-natured man see p. xlv.

96. 18. *Character of authors*. 'Bayle's *Dictionary* is a very useful work for those to consult who love the biographical part of literature, which is what I love most' (*Life* 1. 425).

96. 22. *Baillet* (1649-1706). Johnson refers to his best known work, *Jugements des Savants*. The first of its seven volumes devotes more than half its space to a list of the prejudices interfering with just literary criticism. It discusses fourteen kinds of prejudice, with minute distinction of the many varieties of each kind.

97. 7. *Dryden*. 'How much in vain it is for you to strive against the stream of the people's inclination' (*Essay of Dram. Poesy*, Ker's *Essays of Dryden* 1. 90).

97. 25. *Seneca*. In his *Ludus de Morte Claudii*, §12. More exactly,

Una tantum parte audita,  
Sæpe ne utra.

Claudius is satirized as having been able to see the right in a law-suit 'at hearing only one side of the quarrel—often not either.'

97. 30. *Langbaine*, 1656-92, compiled *A New Catalogue of English Plays*, and *An Account of the English Dramatic Poets*. He was an omnivorous reader of plays, and once owned a collection of over one thousand. Johnson calls him 'the great detector of plagiarism' (*Life of Otway*).

*Borrichius*. Olaf Borch, 1626-90, librarian, and Professor of Philology, Chemistry, and Botany, at Copenhagen. His *De Poetis* is a critical and bibliographical review of Greek and Latin poets, but its most original part is a descriptive list of the mediæval and modern Latin poets of all European nations.

97. 31. *Rapin*, 1621-87, Jesuit critic and theologian. His *Reflexions sur la Poétique* includes a second part, *Sur la Poétique en particulier*, which implies the author's acquaintance with a vast number of writers—Latin, Greek, French, Italian, Spanish, and English.

98. 8. *Dryden*. Johnson's statement is illustrated by the titles of many of the Dissertations; see W. P. Ker's *Essays of Dryden*. Johnson says of Dryden's criticism, 'his occasional and particular positions were sometimes interested, sometimes negligent, and sometimes capricious' (*Life of Dryden*, *Lives* 1. 413).

98. 11. *Addison is suspected*. See p. 332. In *Spectator* 40 (April 16, 1711) he mentions the 'ridiculous doctrine in modern criticism' that playwrights are 'obliged to an equal distribution of rewards and punishments, and an impartial execution of poetical justice.' Four acts of *Cato* had been written; see p. 322.

98. 33. *Scaliger*, Julius Cæsar (1484-1538), born at Padua; his famous treatise on poetry claimed the superiority of Vergil over Homer. This gave rise to a controversy which lasted a century, and in which Scaliger had many followers. Dryden preferred Vergil (Ker, *Essays of Dryden* 2. 128). Johnson and Burke once had a dispute on this question in which Johnson maintained the superiority of Homer (*Life* 5. 79, n. 2).

100. 23. *Addison*. 'A true critic ought to dwell rather upon excellencies than imperfections, to discover the concealed beauties of a writer, and to communicate to the world such things as are worth their observation' (*Spectator*, No. 291). Later in the essay Addison says: 'As I intend in my next paper (really 297) to show the defects in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, I thought fit to premise these few particulars.'

101. This Essay should be compared with Addison's *Vision of Mirza*, *Spectator* No. 159.

101. 1. *Seneca*. 'Tota vita nihil aliud quam ad mortem iter est' (*Dial* 11. 11. 2; cf. 6. 21, end). I find no passage exactly corresponding to Johnson's quotation.

101. 18. *Ocean of life*. 'On life's vast ocean diversely we sail' (Pope, *Essay on Man*, 2. 107). Johnson uses the same figure at 218. 8, and in *Rasselas*, chap. 12; cf. *Idler*, No. 2, first paragraph.

105. 35. *Gaze not idly*; touching upon what Johnson considered his own peculiar failing; cf. 122. 1 ff.; 393.

106. 4. *An ancient poet*. Lucretius. Johnson makes a

free paraphrase, doubtless from memory, of *De Rerum Natura* 5. 200-209. Munro translates: 'In the first place, of all the space which the vast reach of heaven covers, a portion greedy mountains and forests of wild beasts have occupied, rocks and wasteful pools take up, and the sea, which holds wide apart the coasts of different lands. Next of nearly two-thirds burning heat and the constant fall of frost rob mortals. What is left for tillage, even that nature by its power would overrun with thorns, unless the force of man made head against it, accustomed for the sake of a livelihood to groan beneath the strong hoe and to cut through the earth by pressing down the plough.'

108. 1. *Proverbial oracles*. Such as 'A little leak will sink a great ship'; 'Ready money will away'; 'Better spare at the brim than at the bottom.'

108. 14. *Devote days and nights*. See 363. 28, n.

109. 28. *Erasmus*, born at Rotterdam about 1466, lived in the following places: 1497, Oxford; 1499, Paris, then Orleans and St. Omer's; 1506, London, Cambridge, Turin, Bologna; 1508, Padua; 1509, Siena, London, Cambridge; 1513, Strasburg; 1514, Basel; 1517, Flanders, Basel, England; 1520, Basel; 1529, Freiburg; 1535, Basel. He was neither poor nor neglected, but was driven about by his nervous and restless temperament. Carlyle exaggerates the misery of Johnson much as Johnson does that of Erasmus and Statius (142. 15, n.).

110. 3. *Knowledge of the world . . . application to books*. A necessary qualification of genius and scholarship; see p. xxxvi.

110. 5. *Literary heroes*. The term recurs at 128. 18; 215. 27.

110. 7. *Praise of Folly*. The lightest, but best known of his works. It was written at Sir Thomas More's house in England from notes which he made on the journey *from* (not *to*) Italy.

110. 20 ff. This *jeu d'esprit*, with its generalizations, its learned citations from writers ancient and modern, and its formal style, is a sly caricature of Johnson himself. He humorously indulges in the pedantry which he defines



as 'the awkward ostentation of needless learning.' The essay is perhaps his best known.

112. 3. *Symbol of Pythagoras*. This 'most pleasing apothegm' is cited by Steele (*Tatler* 214), but not in the Greek. I do not find it under Pythagoras or the Pythagoreans in any of the compilations of fragments of the philosophers.

112. 12. '*Quam juvat*,' etc., Tib. 1. 1. 45-7.

112. 22. '*Sed nil dulcius*,' etc., *De Rerum Nat.* 2. 7-10.

112. 37. '*Causa latet*,' etc., Vergil, *Æn.* 5. 5.

115. 3. *Heart lightened in a rapid vehicle*. 'In the afternoon, as we were driven rapidly along in the post-chaise, he said to me, "Life has not many things better than this"' (*Life* 2. 453). 'If I had not duties, and no reference to futurity, I would spend my life in driving briskly in a post-chaise with a pretty woman; but she would be one who could understand me, and would add something to the conversation' (*ibid.* 3. 162).

115. 30. *Aretæus*. In his *Causes and Symptoms of Chronic Diseases* 1. 6. According to the common tale, the carpenter was perfectly rational in his work and conversation at home, but, once abroad, he gave way to groans, contortions, and madness, which lasted till he returned.

116. 1. *Solomon's house*. A society described in *The New Atlantis*, founded by King 'Salamona,' and dedicated to the study of science. 'We have large and deep caves of several depths; the deepest are sunk six hundred fathom; and some of them are digged and made under great hills and mountains; so that if you reckon together the depths of the hill and the depth of the cave they are (some of them) above three miles deep. . . . We use them for all coagulations, indurations, refrigerations, and conservations of bodies; and the producing also of new artificial metals.' 'We have high towers; the highest about half a mile in height; and some of them likewise sit upon high mountains; so that the vantage of the hill with the tower is in the highest of more than three miles at least. . . . We use these towers . . . for isolation, refrigeration, conservation; and for the view of divers meteors; as winds, rain, snow, hail; and some of the fiery meteors also.'

116. 22ff. See 172. 8, n.

122. 9. *Summons from the press*. 'He told us, almost all his *Ramblers* were written just as they were wanted for the press; that he sent a certain portion of the copy of an essay, and wrote the remainder, while the former part of it was printing. When it was wanted, and he had fairly sat down to it, he was sure it would be done' (*Life* 3. 42).

125. 31. *Palladio*, 1518-1580, the architect who, through his book on *Architecture* (1570), exerted the greatest influence upon later Renaissance architecture in Europe. Inigo Jones, who translated his book, is the best known Palladian in England. A familiar example of his work still standing is the banqueting room of Whitehall palace (1622).

127. 9. *Enter the shops*. As he had hoped, and perhaps was attempting to do in compiling his *Dictionary*. See p. 49 and notes.

127. 32. *Locke*. In his *Conduct of the Understanding* (about 1697) he says: 'The understanding should be brought to the difficult and knotty parts of knowledge that try the strength of thought and a full bent of the mind by insensible degrees, and in such a gradual proceeding nothing is too hard for it' (§28).

128. 18. *Proper ambition*. Intellectual curiosity was much admired by Johnson; see p. xxxix. For 'heroes of literature' see 110. 5; 215. 27. He is himself one in Carlyle's *Hero as the Man of Letters*. The figure of this sentence is expanded in Tennyson's *Ulysses*.

130. 15. *Fond endearments*. Especially necessary to Johnson; see p. xxi.

130. 27. *The simile of Longinus*. Not in his treatise *On the Sublime*; but cf. chap. 17, which Johnson may have recalled vaguely, or associated with the simile as read in another author.

132. 2. *Pyramid*. See Johnson's theory of society. *Intro.*, p. xlix. The architectural figure is a favorite; cf. 76. 31, and notes.

133. 11. *Authors of London*. Swift, in the Preface to the *Tale of a Tub*, proposes an academy large enough for

9,743 persons, 'which, by modest computation, is reckoned to be pretty near the current number of wits in this island.' Either Johnson's recollection is inexact, or he has some other passage in mind. By 'wits' Swift apparently meant authors.

133. 36. *Hackneyed in the ways of men*. 'So common-hackneyed in the eyes of men' (Shakespeare, *Henry IV.*, Pt. 1, 3. 2. 40). Johnson misquotes *ways* in the *Dictionary* (s. v. *hackney*), but of course has *eyes* in his edition of *Shakespeare*.

135. 12. *The direction of Aristotle*. At the opening of the *Politics*, Bk. 2, where he puts this advice into effect.

137. 11. *Locke*. In *The Conduct of the Understanding*, §38, he says: 'This man presumes upon his parts, that they will not fail him at time of need; and so thinks it superfluous labor to make any provision beforehand. . . . Such men may spread their native riches before the ignorant; but they were best not to come to stress and trial with the skillful.'

137. 26. 'Nescire autem quid antequam natus sis acciderit, id est semper esse puerum' (Cic. *Orator* 120).

139. 24 ff. *Fame*. Notice the veiled figure throughout this paragraph, and cf. *London* 45, n.

140. 11. *Apelles*. A mistake for *Zeuxis*; *Apelles* was famous for his rapidity; the story is told by Plutarch, *De Multitudine Amicorum* 94.

141. 21. *Patuecos of Spain*. Hill cites Howell's *Instructions for Foreign Travel*, §10, where the Duke of Alva when hunting came, 'in the midle of Spaine,' upon the Pattuecos, 'a people that were never known upon the face of the Earth before.' They were 'a company of naked savage people, locked in between an assembly of huge crags and hills indented and hemmed in (as it were) one in another.' But Johnson may have also in mind a passage in Locke's *Conduct of the Understanding* about 'The inhabitants of the Marian Islands, who, being separated by a large tract of sea from all communion with the habitable parts of the earth, thought themselves the only people in the world' (*Works*, Bohn Ed., 1. 30). He cited this essay the preceding month (137. 11); also at 127. 32.

142. 15. *Statius*. Johnson refers to the preface to the *Silva*, where Statius makes a complacent apology for the necessary speed of composition imposed upon him by orders from great men. He mentions 'hos libellos, qui mihi subito calore et quadam festinandi voluptate fluxerunt.' Statius seems not to have been indigent (cf. *Silv.* 3. 1. 61), though it is characteristic of Johnson to imagine him so; cf. 129. 28, n. The twelve years spent in composition of the *Thebaid* are mentioned at the close of the twelfth, and last book. The quotation is from *Silv.* 4. 7. 26-8.

142. 26. *Ovid*. See the *Tristia* 1. 7. 11-end.

143. 10. *Nine years*. *Ars Poetica* 388.

143. 15. '*Multa dies*,' etc. *Ibid.* 293.

143. 18. *Blotted manuscripts of Milton*. Given in facsimile in *Facsimiles of the Milton Manuscripts at Trinity College*, ed. by W. A. Wright, and in Sotheby's *Ramblings in Elucidation of the Autograph of Milton*. Of these most interesting illustrations of great poems in the making, see especially *Lines at a Solemn Music* and *Lycidas*.

143. 20. *Pope's compositions*. 'He examined lines and words with minute and punctilious observation, and retouched every part with indefatigable diligence, till he had nothing left to be forgiven. For this reason he kept his pieces very long in his hands while he considered and reconsidered them' (Johnson's *Life of Pope*, *Lives* 3. 221). 'He is said to have sent nothing to the press till it had lain two years under his inspection' (*ibid.* 220).

144. 23 ff. 'Baretti used sometimes to walk with Johnson through the streets at night, and occasionally entered into conversation with unfortunate women who frequent them, for the sake of hearing their stories. It was from a history of one of those which a girl told under a tree in the King's Bench Walk in the Temple to Baretti and Johnson that he formed the story of *Misella*' (Prior's *Malone*). A paper on the same subject, less elevated and sustained, occurs in *Speciator* 190; cf. Hogarth's series, *The Harlot's Progress*.

155. 7. *Brand of their calling*. 'Perfect good breeding consists in having no particular mark of any profession;

. . . . in a military man you can commonly distinguish the brand of a soldier' (*Life* 2. 82).

158. 5. *Fabricius*. Hill suggested that David Fabricius, the astronomer is meant, but he was a Protestant. *Mechanist*, not in the *Dict.*, means usually 'inventor' in Johnson.

159. 29. *Abatement of character*. See *Rambler*, No. '12, and 95. 19, n.

160. 16. *Sardinian*—or Sardonic—laughter. The expression is found in French, Italian, and Spanish, but is originally Greek (*Odyssey* 20. 302). 'The common expl. given of this laugh was that it resembled the effect produced by a *Sardinian plant*, . . . which when eaten screwed up the face of the eater' (Liddell and Scott, *Greek Lex.*).

161. 7. *This method of ingratiating themselves*. 'Do not tell stories in company; if by chance you know a very short story, and exceedingly applicable to the present subject of conversation, tell it in as few words as possible' (Chesterfield, *Letters to his Son* Oct. 16, O. S., 1747).

161. 32. *Good-natured man*. See 96. 15 n.

161. 37. *Profaneness and obscenity*. Johnson would never 'sit unmoved and unaffected' amidst them. 'Obscenity and Impiety have always been repressed in my company' (*Life* 4. 295).

162. 20. *Fifteen years*. It was very nearly fifteen years since Johnson began life in London. Such caricatures of clubs are common in earlier periodicals, but none are more delightful than Goldsmith's.

162. 36. *Necessary to be loved*. See 130. 15, and note.

172. 8 ff. The 'Oriental tale' is a not infrequent form of periodical essay in the Eighteenth Century, though it sometimes assumed more elaborate proportions. Miss Martha V. Conant begins her interesting book *The Oriental Tale in England in the Eighteenth Century* by saying that in such a study 'the high lights fall upon the *Arabian Nights*, Dr. Johnson's *Rasselas*, Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World*, and Beckford's *Vathek*.' Addison, however, is the earliest master of Oriental narrative in the periodicals, and chiefly from him Johnson learned to use it. Besides this story of Seged and the story of Omar (p. 210), Johnson

wrote six other Oriental tales for *The Rambler* or *The Idler*, namely, *Rambler* 38, 65 (strongly resembling *Spectator* 584, 5), 120 (p. 116), 190; *Idler* 75, 99 (after the *Vision of Mirza*, *Spectator* 159). Like Addison's stories, Johnson's are moralistic or philosophical in tendency, but are somewhat heavier and more serious. They, of course, culminate in *Rasselas*. '*Seged* . . . is obviously an earlier draft of *Rasselas*,' Conant, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

183. 6. *Fining for Sheriff*. Paying a high fine to escape the duties of the office. 'Some have fined for sheriff, and none are worth less than forty thousand pounds' (*Rambler* 116).

185. 8. '*How I hate his beams*.' Milton, *Par. Lost* 4. 37.

189. This essay is in part from La Bruyère; see R. Kleuker, *Johnsons Verhältniss zur franz. Literatur*, p. 71.

192. 3 ff. A week before this paper was written Johnson's mother died in Lichfield; see pp. 368-70.

193. 7. *Tully*. 'Nemo enim est tam senex qui se annum non putet posse vivere' (*Cato the Elder on Old Age* 24).

194. 12. 'There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth' (Luke 15. 10; cf. 8).

194. 20. See II. Tim. 4. 7, 8; I. Cor. 3. 8.

194. 29. '*Life and immortality*' II. Tim. 1. 10.

194. 30. *Epicurus*, in the Fourth Century, founded the philosophy which bears his name. He taught that perfect independence, self-reliance, and contentment were the only means of happiness.

194. 33. *Zeno*. Founder of the Stoic philosophy in the Fourth Century B.C. *Rambler* 32 discusses 'the Vanity of Stoicism.'

196. 23. *Death of Hercules*. The details are all from the vivid account of Ovid, *Met.* 9. 166-238.

197. 4. *A passage in the Iliad*. Bk. 21, ll. 34-135. The Trojan prince was Lycaon, son of Priam.

197. 18. *Ulysses*. Referring to Homer, *Odyssey* 19. 361-502. When Odysseus returned, travel-stained and unknown, after his long wanderings, his old nurse was about to wash his feet when she recognized him by a scar on the thigh, and would have prematurely betrayed his identity, had he not suddenly stopped her.

197. 24. *Death of Epaminondas*. At Mantinea. Johnson amplifies the story as told by Cornelius Nepos (*Epaminondas* 9). The wounded Theban would not suffer the spear to be drawn from his side till the messenger came from the battle with news of victory.

197. 35. *Dissolution of Parliament*. The Long Parliament, arbitrarily dissolved in 1653. Johnson evidently was struck with the vivid picture in Edmund Ludlow's *Memoirs*, where Cromwell 'suddenly standing up, made a speech wherein he loaded the Parliament with the vilest reproaches, charging them not to have (i.e. with not having) a heart to do anything for the public good.' And again; 'looking upon one of the members, he said, "There sits a drunkard"; and giving much reviling language to others, he commanded the mace to be taken away, saying, "What shall we do with this bauble? Here, take it away." Having brought all into this disorder, Major General Harrison went to the Speaker as he sat in the chair, and told him, that seeing things were reduced to this pass, it would not be convenient for him to remain there. The Speaker answered that he would not come down unless he were forced. "Sir," said Harrison, "I will lend you my hand"; and thereupon putting his hand within his, the Speaker came down' (ed. Firth, l. 352-4). The mention of Pandemonium, the Council-hall of the devils in *Paradise Lost*, insinuates that the Puritan Parliament was essentially a Council of Fiends, with Cromwell for its Satan. Benjamin West, the American painter, afterwards painted this subject. He knew Reynolds and Johnson, and may have got his suggestion from this passage.

198. 12. On Johnson's appreciation of art see p. xliv.

200-208. In these essays Johnson shows his opinion of cant in literary criticism. Minim speaks only the platitudes which had been accumulating since the days of Dryden's literary dictatorship.

201. 36. *Nine years*. See 143. 10, n.

203. 6. *Phædra and Hippolytus*, a tragedy by Edmund Smith, which 'pleased the critics, and the critics only.' 'It is a scholar's play, such as may please the reader rather than the spectator; the work of a vigorous and elegant

mind, accustomed to please itself with its own conceptions, but of little acquaintance with the course of life' (Johnson's *Life of Smith, Lives* 2. 16). Addison deplored the public's neglect of the play in *Spectator* 18.

203. 37. *Barbarossa*, by Dr. Brown, acted by Garrick. Johnson criticised it because 'the use of the bell is unknown to the Mahometans' (*Life* 2. 131, n. 2). *Cleone*, by Robert Dodsley, was acted by Garrick in 1758, who said of two friends who came to see it, 'they were starved for want of company to keep them warm.' Nevertheless 'it was well received.' See *Life* 1. 325 and note. Johnson said of it, 'I am afraid there is more blood than brains.'

204. 9. 'Sound an echo to the sense.' Pope, *Essay on Criticism* 365.

In his *Life of Pope* Johnson protests against exaggeration of this quality.

204. 15. 'And pulpit,' etc., Butler's *Hudibras* 1. 1. 11, 12.

204. 19. 'Honor is like,' etc. Slightly misquoted from *Hudibras* 2. 2. 385-8. Either Johnson or Minin is mistaken in inferring, as it appears, that Butler refers to a soap bubble. He means the drop or bulb of glass which, if nipped at the stem, will burst to powder. The phenomenon puzzled the Royal Society.

205. 16. *An academy*. For Johnson's opinion of such attempts, see 56. 6 and note.

205. 34. 'The great vulgar.' Cowley, *Imitations of Horace*, *Od.* 3. 1 (Hill).

206. 32. 'The ground,' etc. Misquoting *Par. Lost* 2. 595: 'The parching air Burns froze,' etc.

206. 35. 'So thick a drop,' etc. *Ibid.* 3. 25.

208. 7. *Royal Society*. The oldest scientific society in Great Britain and one of the oldest in Europe. It was formally founded in 1660. Sir Isaac Newton was for many years its President. Dryden's expectations of its triumphs, especially in navigation, are expressed in the *Annus Mirabilis*, st. 161-6. It was the custom to make fun of it from the beginning as late as Gray's time; cf. Johnson, *Lives* 2. 38, 9. Johnson doubtless has in mind Butler's fragment, *A Satire upon the Royal Society*. Disparagers



were answered in Sprat's famous *History of the Royal Society*, 1667.

210. 17. *Augustus*. At his death, as narrated by Suetonius, *Octavius* 99.

210. 19. See 172. 8, n.

### LIFE OF SAVAGE

Boswell in the *Life* (l. 169-174) is the first publicly to doubt the story of Savage's birth. No other serious discussion of the matter appeared until 1858 when, in *Notes and Queries* (2nd Series, 3. 361, 385, 425, 445), W. Moy Thomas reviewed the whole question in the light of all procurable evidence, and concluded that Savage was an impostor. In addition to Boswell's evidence, Mr. Thomas finds that, of Lady Macclesfield's two children, the second, a boy named Richard, was born Jan. 18, 1696|7 (not Jan. 10, 1697|8, as Savage asserts), and there is some reason to think he died in November, 1698. At any rate no trace of him is found after that. Both children were hidden from the Earl of Macclesfield, but their mother was nevertheless tenderly devoted to them and to their welfare. The boy never bore the name of Savage. The poet made no claim of identity with this boy until he was at least twenty. He said he learned that he was Lady Macclesfield's son from letters of his grandmother to his nurse, but these papers were never seen; in later life he confessed that the nurse was a myth, and gave indefinite and conflicting accounts of his sources of information. Mr. Thomas' argument is long and ingenious, but contains so large an element of mere conjecture and opinion that it is not fully conclusive. The real facts probably never will be revealed. Savage seems to have been convinced, on insufficient evidence, that he was Lady Macclesfield's son, and was impudent and irresponsible enough to create the evidence necessary to his purpose. Lady Macclesfield seemed to have been equally sure that Savage was not her son, but, in the want of sufficient evidence, followed the wisest policy of silence. Johnson drew his account of Savage's birth from printed accounts for which Savage himself had furnished the ma-

terial; evidently he never discussed the subject with his friend (*Life* 1. 156).

Johnson's authorities for Savage's birth and early life, in addition to the poet's own statements made to him during their intimacy, were: (1) the account in Jacob's *Poetical Register*, 1719; (2) information contained in *The Plain Dealer*, 1724, Nos. 28 and 73; (3) *The Life of Mr. Richard Savage*, 1727; (4) Savage's Preface to the second edition of his *Miscellanies*, 1728.

215. 1. Cf. the well-known opening of *Rasselas*: 'Ye who listen with credulity to the whispers of fancy, and pursue with eagerness the phantoms of hope, who expect that age will perform the promises of youth, and that the deficiencies of the present day will be supplied by the morrow, attend to the history of Rasselas, prince of Abyssinia.'

215. 25. *Follow it themselves*. See 254. 34; *Rambler*, No. 14, p. 71 and notes. But in 265. 9 he says the mistake of Savage's life was 'that he mistook the love for the practice of virtue.'

215. 27. *Heroes*. See 128. 18, n.

216. 1. *Volumes*. See 96. 18, and note.

217. 14. *Not indeed easy to discover*. The rest of this paragraph shows that Savage's story was not altogether explicable to Johnson. The wonder is that with his usual incredulity and his knowledge of Savage's character he should have accepted it without further inquiry. But the report was common, and belief in it was so general that scepticism was not encouraged.

218. 8. *Ocean of Life*. See *Rambler* 102, p. 101, and notes.

219. 12. *Happier students*. Milton's *Vacation Exercise* and his famous *Nativity Ode* were written while he was an undergraduate at Cambridge.

220. 11. *American plantations*. Virginia or the West Indies.

221. 10. *Letters*. In later life Savage denied that he found his information thus.

222. 6. *Bangorian Controversy*. A confused and angry dispute essentially on the question of the divine right of

Kings and the authority of the clergy, which centred about Hoadley, Bishop of Bangor, of the Low Church opinion. It ended (1717) in government interference, and the end of the Convocation as a deliberative body.

223. 36. *Without money*. In this year, 1719, there were four actions for debt against Steele (Aitken, *Life of Steele* 2. 203).

224. 21. *Bailiffs*. Hill cites a similar incident in *The Examiner*, No. 11. In Act 3 of Goldsmith's *Good-Natured Man* the hero tries to pass off bailiffs as friends of his. Goldsmith after his habit of adaptation may have got his suggestion from this source or *The Examiner*.

225. 1. *Daughter*. Miss Ously, afterwards married to a Mr. Aynston.

225. 17. *Such weakness is very common*. Johnson may have had himself in mind. See p. xlvii, 382. 11, n., and *Life* 2. 256; 3. 273-8, for quarrels and reconciliation with Goldsmith and Percy.

225. 31. *Wilks*. One of the first actors of his time. *The Tatler* (No. 182) and *The Spectator* (No. 370) praise him, and mention as his best parts, Macduff, Sir Harry Wildair (in Farquhar's play), and Prince Hal in *Henry IV*. Johnson's character of him is not over-drawn.

226. 5. *That condition*. Of an actor. Boswell finds in this passage a very strong symptom of Johnson's prejudice against players, which Boswell attributed to his deafness, the failure of his own tragedy, and his jealousy of the success of his own pupil Garrick (*Life* 1. 167). But see p. xliv. Johnson said: 'He who can represent exalted characters, and touch the noblest passions, has very respectable powers; and mankind has agreed in admiring great talents for the stage' (*Life* 3. 184).

227. 2. *Mrs. Oldfield*, 1683-1730. An actress of humble origin, who progressed slowly until her first great success as Lady Betty Modish in Cibber's *Careless Husband* (1704). She was very beautiful, and a brilliant actress of both comedy and tragedy. *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* both praise her. She made many friends in the world of fashion, and received burial in Westminster Abbey.

**228. 30. *Temptations of poverty.*** 'When I was running about this town a very poor fellow, I was a great arguer for the advantages of poverty; but I was at the same time very sorry to be poor. Sir, all the arguments which are brought to or present poverty as no evil, show it to be evidently a great evil' (*Life* 1. 441). He writes to Boswell (*ibid.* 3. 149): 'Poverty, my dear friend, is so great an evil, and pregnant with so much temptation, and so much misery, that I cannot but earnestly enjoin you to avoid it.' Again (p. 157): 'Resolve not to be poor: whatever you have, spend less.' He wrote two papers for the *Rambler* (Nos. 53 and 57) to this effect. By 'poverty' he implies excess of expenses over income.

**229. 9. *Sir Thomas Overbury*, 1581-1613.** He was the victim, by slow poison, of the wife of his friend, Robert Carr, Viscount of Rochester, and favorite of James I.

**230. 6. *Cibber*.** While Johnson admitted that Cibber's *Apology* and his plays (especially *The Careless Husband*) had merit, he despised the man for his 'impenetrable impudence' and other reasons. He said of him: 'It is wonderful that a man, who for forty years has lived with the great and the witty, should have acquired so ill the talent of conversation: and he had but half to furnish; for one half of what he said was oaths' (*Life* 2. 40). Again, 'Taking from his conversation all that he ought not to have said, he was a poor creature' (*ibid.* p. 92). When the poet Fenton submitted a tragedy to him, he refused it with the brutal advice that Fenton try to support himself by *honest* labor. The play was accepted at the rival theatre, 'and the brutal petulance of Cibber confuted, though perhaps not shamed, by general applause' (*Lives* 2. 260). See also 266. 15, and note. Cibber was enthroned hero of the *Dunciad* in the second edition.

**230. 8. *Hill*.** Aaron Hill, 1685-1750, was first a sensational and unsuccessful promoter of money-making schemes, but was at length forced to become a theatrical manager and literary man. He first quarreled with Pope, then bored him with excessive flattery and consultation about his own compositions. He was a generous man, however, but no critic.

231. 15. Johnson loses no chance to condemn the practice of servile dedication. See 324. 20.

232. 18. *Lady Mary Wortley Montague*. Pope's sometime friend, whom he came to hate and to attack savagely. She is famous for two volumes of interesting letters, many of them written from Constantinople and Italy.

233. 34. *First of the company*. Cf. 299. 18. Neither was Johnson.

234. 1. *Amusements*. See *Life* 1. 250, 51 for a harmless 'frisk' of a night and a day in which Johnson joined Langton and Beauclerk.

234. 24. *Newgate*. The condition of the common criminals in Newgate may be inferred from John Wesley's letter to the *Chronicle* in 1761: 'Of all the seats of woe on this side hell, few, I suppose, exceed or even equal Newgate. If any region of horror could exceed it a few years ago (about 1740), Newgate in Bristol did; so great was the filth, the stench, the misery and wickedness which shocked all who had a spark of humanity left.' See Lecky, *England in the Eighteenth Century*, chap. 4.

236. 19. *Page*. Known as the 'hanging judge.' Pope wrote, *Imitations of Horace* 1. 81, 2:

Slander or poison dread from Della's rage,  
Hard words or hanging, if your Judge be—

It is said (by Hawkins, note on Johnson's *Pope*) that Page sent his clerk to complain to Pope of this couplet, who said the blank could be filled by other monosyllabic names than the Judge's. 'But, sir,' said the clerk, 'the judge says that no other word will make sense of the passage.' Pope sent his respects to the Judge with the message that, having proved himself a poet as well as a judge, Page should fill up the blank as he pleased.

238. 20. *The queen*. Lecky says of Queen Caroline: 'This very remarkable woman, who governed her husband with an absolute sway in spite of his infidelities, and who often exhibited an insight into character, a force of expression, and a political judgment worthy of a great statesman, was the firmest of all the friends of Walpole, and deserves a large share of the credit which is given to his

administration' (*England in the Eighteenth Century*, chap. 4).

239. 35. *Countess of Hertford*. Thomson dedicated his *Spring* to her. It was her practice, says Johnson, probably on Savage's authority, 'to invite every summer some poet into the country to hear her verses and assist her studies. This honor was one summer conferred on Thomson, who took more delight in carousing with Lord Hertford and his friends than assisting her ladyship's poetical operations, and therefore never received another summons' (*Life of Thomson*, §16).

241. 6. *Equality*. 'Equability' (Johnson's *Dict.*). Obsolete in this sense. Apparently 'equanimity' is yet too rare in this sense for Johnson's use.

242. 10 ff. Doubtless it was the qualities here mentioned that recommended Savage to Johnson's affection. Nor was his 'resentment' (242. 22) against it. Johnson said of 'dear, dear Bathurst whom I loved better than ever I loved any human creature' that he was 'a man to my very heart's content: he hated a fool, he hated a rogue, and he hated a Whig; he was a very good hater' (*Miscellanies* l. 158, 204).

245. 29 ff. From these paragraphs may be inferred Johnson's defense of himself for his subsequent alteration of the sentiments expressed in *London*. See p. xvii.

246. 30. *The true author*. Pope. See Johnson's *Pope*, §148.

246. 33. *Freedom of the press*. Johnson was never strongly in its favor. 'It seems not more reasonable to leave the right of printing unrestrained, because writers may be afterward censured, than it would be to sleep with the doors unbolted, because by our laws we can hang a thief' (*Life of Milton*). 'In short, Sir, I have got no further than this: Every man has a right to utter what he thinks truth, and every man has a right to knock him down for it. Martyrdom is the test' (*Life* 4. 12).

247. 11. *Power of the crown*. See p. lii.

247. 19. *The Bathos, or the Art of Sinking in Poetry*. In this skit, published by Swift and Pope, the letters had been *prefixed*, and many poets of the time had been made

very angry supposing that the various initials referred to themselves. The Dedication says, 'the greatest part of them at random,' but Pope and Savage both well knew that the letters had personal significance, and the poets were justly angry. See Johnson's *Pope*, §148. The 'friend' here mentioned may have been Johnson himself.

248. 18. *Patron of literature*. Though he spent a fortune on pictures, Walpole had no deep interest in art or literature. He said: 'I totally neglected reading when I was in business, and to such a degree that I cannot now read a page' (*Dict. Nat. Biogr.* 59. 204A). See also 257. 9 ff.; 275. 17. On Walpole see notes on *London* 29, 30, 51, 55.

248. 22. *A person of yet higher rank*. See 286. 23.

248. 25 ff. This paragraph touches upon the subject of Johnson's *London* in which the protests against Walpole and his régime are put into Savage's mouth.

250. 14 ff. For Johnson's standard of criticism implied in these paragraphs see p. xv.

250. 19. On the architectural figure see 76. 31, n.

251. 26. *Ten guineas*. For *London* Johnson got ten guineas (*Life* 1. 124), and for *The Vanity of Human Wishes* fifteen (*ibid.*, p. 193).

251. 31. Such 'superstitious regard' is as far as possible from Johnson's own method of composition. See pp. xiii, xxxv.

252. 12. *Booksellers*. Though Johnson never made a good bargain with them, and though he once beat Osborne, the bookseller, because he was 'impertinent' to him, yet he held them as a class in high regard. He said: 'The booksellers are generous, liberal minded men' (*Life* 1. 304). Among them the Dillys, Strahan, and Davies were his particular friends.

254. 34. *Inconsistency of his writings with his conversation*. See 215. 25, and note.

256. 11. *Inquisitiveness*. Intellectual curiosity was highly valued and praised by Johnson. See p. xxxix; cf. 285. 28.

256. 19. *A critic on human life*, i. e., a poet. Johnson often insists upon a knowledge of the world of men as

indispensable to a poet and a scholar. See p. xxxvi; also 110. 3; *Rambler* No. 137, p. 126; No. 180; *Rasselas*, chap. 10; *Vanity of Human Wishes* 158.

257. 9. *One particular person*. Sir Robert Walpole. See 248. 18, and note.

264. 1. *Arts like these*. Arts of self-delusion. Johnson suffered much from the habit of practising them. *The Preface to the Dictionary* is one of many of his confessions of it, and perhaps his most eloquent.

265. 8. *Error of his life*. See 215. 25, and note.

266. 15. *Cibber*. See 230. 6, and note. Cibber once brought Johnson one of his favorite odes to have his opinion of it. 'I could not bear such nonsense, and would not let him read it to the end; so little respect had I for that great man! (laughing)' (*Life* 2. 92).

266. 20. *Volunteer Laureate*. Johnson refers to this in *London* 70 (see note).

266. 26. *Mr. Urban*, the *nom de plume* of Cave, the editor and publisher of the magazine, and Johnson's employer in his early years.

269. 18. *Princess Anne*. She was married to the Prince of Orange in 1734. The subject was not inspiring. 'She was fat, ill-shaped, disfigured by the small-pox, and short, while the prince was deformed. The princess had leave to refuse him, but replied that she would marry him if he were a baboon. "Well then," said the King, "there is baboon enough for you"' (*Diet. Nat. Biogr.* 21. 171A).

269. 32. *About this time*. 1734.

270. 5. *Tory mob*. Doubtless one of the popular Tory demonstrations against Walpole's Excise Bill. See *London* 29, and note.

271. 15. *Dispute between the Bishop of London and the Chancellor*. Dr. Rundle had been recommended to the bishopric of Gloucester by the Lord Chancellor, and his appointment had been announced, but the Bishop of London interposed, really on account of Rundle's Low Church opinions. Johnson's High Church convictions are reflected in the language of this paragraph.

275. 17. *Walpole*. See 248. 18, and note.

275. 36. *Lord Bolingbroke*. Leader of the Tories when



they were driven from power at the death of Queen Anne. He fled to France when threatened with impeachment, but reappeared after ten years, and tried to lead the opposition against Walpole, who was now firmly established. He was particularly active in defeating the Excise Bill (1733), but saw no further chance for himself, and retired in 1735. Doubtless it was Savage's eager literary endeavors to exalt Bolingbroke that drew forth Walpole's promise and professions of friendship, but he abandoned both when he saw no further danger in Bolingbroke. Savage's loud allegiance may have been merely refined blackmail.

276. 6. *The prince*. Frederick, Prince of Wales. He had become Bolingbroke's friend, the opposer of Walpole, and quarreled violently and continually with his father and mother. 'The Prince's affable manners rendered him more popular in the country than the King, and his tastes inclined him to the brilliant literary and social circle which was in opposition to the ministry' (Lecky, *England in the Eighteenth Century*, chap. 3).

276. 30 ff. Johnson here expresses sentiments on emigration and retirement quite opposite to those of *London* 9-18, but unaltered during the rest of his life. He invariably opposed the illusive notions of America and other new countries which he here describes, and deplored emigration. 'To a man of mere animal life, you can urge no argument against going to America, but that it will be some time before he will get the earth to produce. But a man of any intellectual enjoyment will not easily go and immerse himself and his posterity for ages in barbarism' (*Life* 5. 78). See also his amusing remark at 2. 228. He blamed oppressive landlords for increasing emigration. The reader will recall Goldsmith's beautiful lines on emigration, *Deserted Village* 363-430.

278. 3 ff. This paragraph contains one of his fundamental reasons for Johnson's dislike of America. See p. 1; *Vanity of Human Wishes* 185 and note; *Falkland's Islands*.

278. 35 ff. Perhaps Boswell knew Johnson's opinion here expressed when he once boasted that the Scotch were the first to abolish vails. 'Johnson: "Sir, you abolished vails,

because you were too poor to be able to give them" (Life 2. 78).

'It was said that a foreign minister, dining on a great occasion with a nobleman of the highest rank, usually expended in this way as much as ten guineas, that a sum of two or three guineas was a common expenditure in great houses, and that a poor clergyman, invited to dine with his Bishop, not unfrequently spent in vails to the servants, at a single dinner, more than would have fed his family for a week' (Lecky, *England in the Eighteenth Century*, chap. 5).

281. 8 ff. Johnson told Reynolds that 'one night in particular, when Savage and he walked around St. James Square for want of a lodging, they were not at all depressed by their situation; but in high spirits and brim full of patriotism, traversed the square for several hours, inveighed against the minister, and "resolved they would stand by their country"' (Life 1. 164).

282. 35. *Subversion of all economy.* For similar reasons Johnson was a troublesome guest to Mrs. Boswell. 'His irregular hours and uncouth habits, such as turning the candles with their heads downwards, when they did not burn bright enough, and letting the wax drop upon the carpet, could not but be disagreeable to a lady' (Life 2. 269, n. 1).

285. 28. *Naturally inquisitive.* Cf. 256. 11, and note.

286. 10. *Duck.* Described in a note of Hawkesworth's on Swift, cited by Hill: 'Stephen Duck was a poor thrasher, who having written some verses, they were shown to Queen Caroline, who made him her library-keeper at Richmond. He afterwards took orders, and was preferred to a living; but growing melancholy he at last drowned himself.'

286. 23. *Duke of Chandos.* Remembered chiefly for his wealth and for Pope's amusing account of his country-seat and its tasteless extravagance in *Moral Essays* 4. 79-168. Handel lived two years with him.

288. 10. 1738. The preceding year Johnson first came to London; this year he first met Savage, and wrote *London*, in which Savage is the speaker.

291. 15 ff. Cf. p. 293. The reader will recall the story of Johnson and the shoes (*London* 162, n.).

292. 27. *Pastorals and songs*. For Johnson's low opinion of pastoral poetry see p. xxvi; *Milton* in *Lives* 1.163-4; other references are given by Hill, *ibid.* 164, n.2.

292. 33. *These expectations*. How they are usually disappointed Johnson has shown in *Rambler*, Nos. 42, 124, 135; *Idler*, No. 71. He considered life in the country 'a kind of mental imprisonment' (*Life* 4.338). He once said: 'No wise man will go to live in the country, unless he has something to do which can be better done in the country' (*ibid.* 3.253); and 'They who are content to live in the country are fit for the country' (*ibid.* 3.338). See *Adventurer* 102, p. 182.

293. 8. *Liberties of the Fleet*. The notorious Fleet Prison stood a little to the north of Ludgate Circus. In certain stated regions surrounding it, called the liberty, prisoners for debt were allowed by special privilege to lodge, and within these bounds Savage takes refuge to avoid the persecution of his creditors.

297. 18. *Mr. Thomson*, author of *The Seasons*, and Savage's friend. See 239. 35, n. *Mr. Mallet*, a friend of Thomson, and author of the ballad *William and Margaret; Rule Britannia*, by Thomson, has sometimes been attributed to him. He is the subject of one of Johnson's *Lives* (3.400).

299. 21. *A place of commerce*. Bristol was at this time the largest British town outside of London. Its prosperity was due to its rich trade with the American colonies.

303. 16. *My birthnight*. He was forty-five.

304. 11. *Nash*. The famous Beau Nash. See the fascinating *Life of Nash* by Goldsmith, who exhibits both his cruelty and his humanity. Nash, he says, 'could not stifle the natural impulse which he had to do good, but frequently borrowed money to relieve the distressed' (near end).

304. 15. On Newgate, Bristol, in Savage's time, see 233. 24, n. Savage was of course exempted from the lot of a common prisoner. The miseries of debtors' prisons at the time were notorious; Johnson eloquently wrote against them in the *Adventurer*, Nos. 53, 62; *Idler*, Nos. 22, 38 (one of the best accounts).

307. 6. *His friend*. Cave, the printer (Nichols).

307. 26. *Mr. S——*. 'Strong, of the Post-Office' (Nichols).

309. 2. *Conversation of criminals*. Cf. 281. 8 ff., and note. Savage's range of observation of society was no wider than Johnson's. See p. xx, xxi; *Rambler*, Nos. 170, 171, pp. 144 ff.

309. 17. *Except one*. Pope.

311. 2. *Seldom provoked to laughter*. Chesterfield writes to his son (March 9, O. S., 1748): 'I could heartily wish that you may often be seen to smile, but never heard to laugh while you live.'

311. 32. *Knowledge of life*. See 256. 19, and note.

312. 5. *The graces*. In the letter just quoted Chesterfield recommends 'the graces' to his son.

314. 10. *One piece*. See 273. 23.

314. 22. *Affectation*. An important principle in Johnson's criticism; see p. xxvi.

### THE LIFE OF ADDISON

318. 23. *Corbet*. A college-mate of Johnson's at Pembroke, who, Hawkins says, proposed to support Johnson at Oxford, but never did.

319. 10. *Chartreux*. Other famous pupils of the 'Charterhouse' were Crashaw, Lovelace, Blackstone, John Wesley, Grote, and Thackeray.

319. 30 ff. This story of Addison's severity with Steele Johnson got from Savage (*Life* 4. 53), but it has been doubted. Macaulay accepted it and defended Addison; cf. 224. 8 ff.

320. 26. Hill cites Boileau's *Fragment d'un autre Dialogue*, where he expressed his 'contempt of modern Latin.'

320. 35 ff. This observation on modern Latin resembles his observations on the rimed couplet (see p. xxix); but Johnson had a higher regard for Latin than he here expresses (p. xxxii).

321. 16. *Sacheverell*. One account makes him a college roommate of Addison. He was afterwards a fierce and

narrow Tory, and preached a sermon on non-resistance which precipitated violent anti-Whig riots.

321. 29 ff. As usual Johnson utters his protest against servility in literature; cf. 231. 15, n.

321. 30. *Montague*. Lord Halifax, an able Whig financier, but no poet; he was very vain. Pope's *Epistle to Arbuthnot* satirizes him (231-248) as 'puffed by every quill,' and 'Fed with soft dedication all day long.'

322. 14. *Smith*. Edmund Smith, subject of one of Johnson's *Lives*, who says of one of his Latin odes: 'Nor do I know where to find it equalled among the modern writers.'

322. 15. *Praise*. Mrs. Thrale said: 'I do not know for certain what will please Dr. Johnson; but I know for certain that it will displease him to praise anything, even what he likes, extravagantly' (*Life* 3. 225).

322. 21. *Learn the French language*. An unusual course at that time. The general cultural intercourse between England and France was just reviving after a lapse of nearly two centuries. See *Texte, Rousseau and the Cosmopolitan Spirit in Literature*, translated by J. W. Matthews, 1899.

323. 9. *Italian authors*. One is Alberti, from whose *Descrizione* (1550) Chesterfield thought Addison had taken most of his remarks and classical references. See Hill's note.

323. 12. *Not a very severe censure*. It was observed of Johnson's *Journey to the Western Islands* that a great part of it had been in his mind before he left London. He replied: 'A man must carry knowledge with him, if he would bring home knowledge' (*Life* 3. 301, 2).

323. 26. *Blenheim*. Marlborough's most famous victory. With the Austrian Prince Eugene he defeated the French, and overthrew the military superiority which they had maintained for sixty years. Cf. *Vanity of Human Wishes* 185, and note.

323. 30. *Some better poet*. Cf. 352. 1, and note.

324. 7. *Simile of the Angel*. See 352. 25, and note.

324. 14. *Italian operas*. Addison afterwards ridiculed Italian opera in *Spectator* 5, 18, 29. Though it first ap-

peared in England under Charles II., it did not become popular till the time of Queen Anne.

324. 20. *Duchess of Marlborough*. The famous Sarah Jennings, who for a time controlled Queen Anne. Johnson once said of her that 'she had not superior parts, but was a bold, frontless woman, who knew how to make the most of her opportunities in life' (*Life* 5. 175).

324. 31. *Wharton* (1648-1715) was one of Walpole's predecessors in corrupt methods. 'He spared no expense, took a pride in making his constituents drunk on the best ale, and knew all of the electors' children by name' (*Dict. Nat. Biogr.*). He wrote the words of the famous political song, *Lillibulero*.

326. 19. Johnson has in mind his own difficulties as a periodical writer. Cf. his fine apology in the last number of *The Rambler*. In choice of material at least Addison and Steele had the advantage of him. 'They had the whole field of life before them, untrodden and unsurveyed. . . . They that follow are forced to peep into neglected corners' (*Idler* 3). Cf. pp. xviii, xix.

326. 28. *One of the first papers*. No. 3, *Vision of Public Credit*, in which it appears that the Jacobites are enemies of public prosperity.

327. 6. *Casa*. His *Il Galateo* (1558) had been several times translated into English.

*Castiglione*. Johnson called *The Courtier* 'the best book that ever was written upon good breeding' (*Life* 5. 276). It appeared in 1528, and was first translated into English in 1561. Johnson occasionally cites it in his works.

327. 16. *La Bruyère*. *Les Caractères de Théophraste traduite du Grec, avec les Caractères et les Mœurs de ce Siècle* (1688). The British Museum has some twenty-one editions published before Johnson wrote his *Addison*.

327. 29. *Arbiter elegantiarum*. From 'elegantiae arbiter' of Tacitus, *Ann.* 16. 18.

328. 14. *L'Estrange's Observer*. Entirely political, and devoted to maligning its opponents. It appeared before 1679, three or four times a week. Leslie's *Rehearsal* appeared weekly during the early part of Anne's reign; Leslie was a clergyman who argued for non-resistance, 'a

reasoner who was not to be reasoned against' (*Life* 4. 287, n.).

328. 21. *Royal Society*. See 208. 7, and note.

328. 30. *A subsequent work*. *Freeholder* 45 (Hill).

328. 35. *Initiated in the elegancies of knowledge*. To young Miss Thrale Johnson writes: 'Do you read the *Tatler*? They are part of the books which everybody should read, because they are the sources of conversation, therefore make them part of your library' (*Letters* 2. 352).

329. 6. *Steele in his last paper*. And more particularly in his preface to the collected edition, 1710.

329. 7. *Budgell*. His translation of the *Characters of Theophrastus* was praised by Addison in *The Lover*, No. 39.

329. 11. *Aggravated*. 'To make anything worse, by the addition of some particular circumstance, not essential' (Johnson's *Dict.*).

329. 35. '*Para mi*,' etc. 'For me alone was Don Quixote born, and I for him.' These words are at the end of *Don Quixote* (Hill).

330. 13. *Vapors of incipient madness*. Insanity was the subject of Johnson's 'most dismal apprehension; and he fancied himself seized by it, or approaching to it, at the very time when he was giving proofs of a more than ordinary soundness and vigor of judgment' (*Life* 1. 66). He has portrayed such 'vapors' in *Rasselas*, chapters 4 and 44.

330. 20. *New man*. 'Novus homo,' 'parvenu.'

331. 6. *Swift*. In *Journal to Stella*, under Nov. 2, 1711, Feb. 8, 1712 (Hill).

331. 17. *Cibber*. In his *Apology*, ed. R. W. Lowe, 2. 128. On Cibber see 230. 6, and notes.

331. 24. *Think liberty in danger*. Johnson always scorned such fears as imaginary. See p. li.

332. 8. *Poetical justice*. Johnson refers to this opinion of Addison's in *Rambler* No. 93; see 100. 23, and note.

332. 20. *Heavily in clouds*. The *Cato* begins:

The dawn is overcast, the morning lowers,  
And heavily in clouds brings on the day,  
The great, the important day.

**332. 26.** *The Distressed Mother.* By Ambrose Phillips ('Namby Pamby'), acted in 1712.

**332. 32.** *Bolingbroke.* One of the Tory leaders. See **275. 36, n.** Barton Booth (1681-1733) acted Cato. This success marked the climax of his career. His art was characterized by refinement, dignified reserve, and finished elocution.

**333. 4.** *Mrs. Porter.* She acted Lucia. Johnson once speaking of actors he remembered said, 'Mrs. Porter in the vehemence of rage. . . . I have never seen equalled' (*Life* 4. 243). She 'was so much the favorite of her time that she was welcome on the stage when she trod it by the help of a stick. . . . She was a woman of very gentle and ladylike manners' (*Letters* 2. 344).

**333. 25.** *Censurer of Corneille's Cid.* Richelieu and other members of the Academy. Corneille was partly consoled in the controversy over his play by its popular success. On Johnson's high confidence in popular approval see p. xxvii.

**334. 19.** *Jeffreys.* His verses were left anonymously with the printer, and Addison never knew who wrote them. His other work is forgotten.

**334. 33.** *Unanswered and therefore little read.* To one who had been attacked Johnson said: 'Nay, Sir, do not complain. It is advantageous to an author that his book should be attacked as well as praised. Fame is a shuttlecock. If it be struck at only one end of the room, it will soon fall to the ground' (*Life* 5. 400).

**335. 9.** *Guardian of the Lizards.* The editor represents that he has been chosen guardian to Marmaduke Lizard by his father Sir Ambrose. The *Guardian* contains four papers on the nature of ants, three on the prolusions of Strada, and papers on the Tall Club and the Little Club.

**337. 32.** *Criticism on Milton.* The eighteen papers on this subject constitute one of the earliest critical treatments of *Paradise Lost*. Johnson took a suggestion from them; see p. xiv, n. The popular interest in Milton was much greater in the Eighteenth Century than it has ever been since.

**337. 33.** With the accession of George I. in 1714 be-



gan the ascendancy of the Whigs, which lasted for nearly a half century.

337. 34. *Zeal of Addison*, for the Whig party.

338. 5. *Choice of expression*. Cf. 340. 1. But when he had a congenial subject his composition was highly spontaneous. See 346. 31.

338. 19. *Tory Foxhunter*. *Freeholder* 22, 44, 47.

338. 23. *Milton*. In the *Defense of England against Salmasius*, chap. 8. Charles II. during his exile had hired Salmasius for a hundred Jacobuses, it is said, to defend his father's memory. Milton sneers at these as the very dregs of an exiled King's purse. Oldmixon sneers at the poverty of the same court. See his *History of England*, 1730, p. 419 (Hill).

340. 1. *Quest of fine expression*. See 338. 8, and note.

340. 26. *Their ancient rivalry*. See 346. 12, n.

340. 31. *A nearer way*, i. e., by intrigue or flattery. Johnson does not forget that Sunderland was a Whig.

340. 35. *Tillotson*. Johnson thought less of Tillotson (*Life* 3. 247), and only occasionally cites him in the *Dictionary*.

341. 11. *Language of Homer*. 'Who then among the gods set the twain at strife and variance' (*Il.* 1. 7).

341. 34. *Instigation of Whiggism*. In this discussion, as in the *Parliamentary Debates*, Johnson takes care 'that the Whig dogs should not have the best of it' (*Misc.* 1. 379).

342. 22. *Lines of Cato* (3. 5, last speech).

Remember, O my friends, the laws, the rights,  
The generous plan of power, delivered down  
From age to age by your renowned forefathers  
(So dearly bought, the price of so much blood).  
O let it never perish in your hands!  
But piously transmit it to your children.

342. 32. '*Bellum plusquam civile*.' Adapted from Lucan's *Pharsalia* 1. 1.

342. 35. *The instability of friendship*. Johnson always laments it. 'If a man does not make new acquaintances as he advances through life, he will soon find himself left alone. A man, Sir, should keep his friendship in good repair' (*Life* 1. 300). He frequently discussed it in his essays. See *Rambler* 40, 64, 99, 160; *Idler* 23.

**343. 8 ff.** This paragraph should be read with *Rambler* 60, p. 87. Boswell's passion for his subject so possessed him that he did not regard the evil consequences here mentioned by Johnson.

**343. 28 ff.** Johnson himself was afterwards greatly afflicted with both asthma and dropsy, and died of the latter.

**344. 7.** *Lord Warwick*. Addison's stepson.

**345. 2.** *Swift*. Johnson refers to Addison's appointment as secretary in 1717, but Addison did not, as Johnson supposed, go to Ireland this time.

**345. 5.** *Steele*, in his dedication of *The Drummer* to Congreve. 'Remarkable' he quotes from Tickell's *Preface*.

**345. 11.** *Chesterfield*. *Letters to his Godson*, ed. Carnarvon, p. 185 (Hill).

**345. 12.** *Used to say of himself*. Of this famous remark Johnson once said: 'He had not the retort ready, Sir; he had prepared it beforehand' (*Life* 3. 339). Hill has traced it to *The Tatler* and Burnet's *History of his own Times*.

**346. 12.** The wretched quarrel between Addison and Pope arose over Pope's translation of Homer, which Addison was said to have ranked below a rival version by Tickell. The story is told by Johnson in his *Pope* (*Lives* 3. 128 ff.), and more critically in Elwin's *Life of Pope* (*Works*, ed. Elwin and Courthope, 1. 158 ff.). Pope's terrible lines on Addison (*Epistle to Arbuthnot* 193-214), published after Addison's death, are well-known.

**346. 27.** *Critical eyes*. See 256. 19, and note.

**346. 31.** *Easily communicate*. But with an uncongenial subject he found composition difficult. See 338. 8, 340. 1, and note.

**347. 4.** *Written very fast*. See p. xiii, n. 2.

**347. 11.** *Cato*. The last six lines are:

From hence let fierce contending nations know  
What dire effects from civil discord flow.  
'Tis this that shakes our country with alarms,  
And gives up Rome a prey to Roman arms,  
Produces fraud, and cruelty and strife,  
And robs the guilty world of Cato's life.

**347. 26.** *Button's coffee-house*, in Russell St., Covent Garden, was the resort of wits in Addison's time, as Will's

had been in Dryden's. For many interesting anecdotes of the place see Timbs' *Clubs and Club Life in London* 323-332.

348. 8. *Enslaved by his auxiliary*. Silenus, i. e., drunkenness. Johnson never drank to excess. 'He seems to have been an abstainer from about 1736 to at least as late as 1757, and from about 1765 to the end of his life (1784)' (Hill's note on *Life* 1. 103, where he discusses the subject in full detail).

348. 12. *Mandeville*. The anecdote is told by Hawkins in his *History of Music* 5. 316, n. (Hill), but Johnson probably heard Hawkins tell it. Cf. *Works*, ed. Hawkins, 3. 71, n. Bernard Mandeville (1670-1733) is known for his *Fable of the Bees*. His social instincts and affiliations were not high. He shows by paradoxical reasoning that all civilization is developed from the vicious propensities of men. Johnson had read Mandeville in his youth. 'He did not puzzle me; he opened my views into real life very much' (*Life* 3. 292).

348. 27. Johnson approved this device in argument. "There is as much charity in helping a man down hill, as in helping him up hill." *Boswell*. "I don't think there is as much charity." *Johnson*. "Yes, Sir, if his tendency be downwards. Till he is at the bottom he flounders; get him once there and he is quiet" (*Life* 5. 243).

349. 26. *Taught others*. After Falstaff's 'I am not only witty in myself, but the cause that wit is in other men' (*Henry IV*. pt. 2, 1. 2. 11).

349. 29. *Long connected gaiety with vice*. As a result of the Restoration and the reaction against Puritanism.

349. 43. 'Above all Greek,' etc. Pope *To Augustus*.

350. 2. 'Turned many,' etc. Dan. 12. 3. Johnson's singular reverence kept him from frequent adaptation of Scriptural phrase, and made him disapprove of it in others. Cf. *Intro.*, p. xxviii, xxxv. *Boswell* says, 'He disapproved of introducing scripture phrases into secular discourse' (*Life* 2. 213).

350. 19. *A great writer*. Warburton (Hill).

351. 14. *Compliment Cromwell*. Preposterous, of course, to an age and a man who saw no virtue in Cromwell. Carlyle was one of the first to rehabilitate him.

351. 33. *Gazette in Rhyme*. Warton's *Essay on Pope*. For the implication of this criticism see *London* 72 and note, *Vanity of Human Wishes* 177.

352. 1. *Many of our own writers*. Among them were J. Phillips (by request of the ministry), Prior, Congreve, John Wesley's father, and Dennis. See *Lives* 2. 186, n. 2.

352. 7. '*Mighty bone*.' *Par. Lost* 11. 642.

352. 25. *Simile of the Angel*:

'Twas then great Marlborough's mighty soul was proved,  
That, in the shock of charging hosts unmoved,  
Amidst confusion, horror, and despair,  
Examined all the dreadful scenes of war;  
And taught the doubtful battle where to rage.  
In peaceful thought the field of death surveyed,  
To fainting squadrons sent the timely aid,  
Inspired repulsed battalions to engage,  
So when an angel by divine command  
With rising tempests shakes a guilty land,  
Such as of late o'er pale Britannia past,  
Calm and serene he drives the furious blast;  
And, pleased th' Almighty's orders to perform,  
Rides in the whirlwind and directs the storm.

—ll. 279-92.

353. 3. *Horace. Odes* 4. 2. 5-7; 27-32.

354. 6. *Dr. Madden, a name which Ireland ought to honor*. Yet he was 'a great Whig,' and Johnson once 'castigated' a poem of his at his request. 'However, the Doctor was very thankful, and very generous, for he gave me ten guineas, which was to me at the time a great sum' (*Life* 2. 321; 1. 318).

355. 16. *Such sentiments*. Quotations from *Cato* are still in circulation:

'Tis not in mortals to command success  
But we'll do more, Sempronius—we'll deserve it.

Beauty soon grows familiar to the lover,  
Fades in his eye, and palls upon the sense.

A day, an hour, of virtuous liberty  
Is worth a whole eternity of bondage.

—This pleasing hope, this fond desire,  
This longing after immortality.

Sweet are the slumbers of the virtuous man.

From hence, let fierce contending nations know  
What dire effects from civil discord flow.

355. 27. *Dialogue too declamatory.* He is thinking, doubtless, of his own *Irene*. Garrick said, adapting Johnson's own words, 'When Johnson writes tragedy, declamation roars, and passion sleeps' (*Misc.* 1. 387; cf. 23. 32).

359. 16. *Dryden.* In the Preface to the *Fables, Works*, ed. Scott and Saintsbury, 11. 243 (Hill).

359. 36. *Excellence of a translator.* Of translation Johnson said: 'We must try its effect as an English poem; that is the way to judge of the merit of a translation. Translations are, in general, for people who cannot read the original' (*Life* 3. 256).

360. 20. *By taste rather than by principles.* Cf. Johnson's method, p. xxvii, and the chaotic impressionism of present-day judgment.

360. 21 ff. An interesting account of literary taste about 1780, and of the common opinion of Addison. General culture had greatly increased with growing democracy. At this time Burns was just of age, Wordsworth a boy of ten, Scott was nine, and Coleridge eight.

361. 26 ff. Johnson's scorn for the ballads, and for imitations of them, is notorious. His parodies are well-known; see *Life* 2. 136, n. 4; 212, n. 4.

362. 24. *Aggravation.* 'The act of making heavy' (*Dict.*).

362. 30. *Enthusiastic.* In the peculiar eighteenth century sense, as often applied to the Methodists. Johnson defines enthusiasm, 'a vain belief in private revelation; a vain confidence of divine favor or communication' (*Dict.*).

363. 5. '*Mille habet,*' etc. Tibullus 4. 2. 14.

363. 28. *Days and nights.* An allusion, as Hill shows, to Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 268:

Vos exemplaria Græca  
Nocturna versate manu, versate diurna.

### VERSES ON LEVETT

*Robert Levett.* 'An obscure practiser in physic amongst the lower people, his fees being sometimes very small sums, sometimes whatever provisions his patients could afford him; but of such extensive practice in that way, that Mrs. Williams has told me, his walk was from Houns-

ditch to Marybone. It appears from Johnson's diary that their acquaintance commenced about the year 1746; and such was Johnson's predilection for him, and fanciful estimation of his moderate abilities, that I have heard him say he should not be satisfied, though attended by all the College of Physicians, unless he had Mr. Levett with him. Ever since I was acquainted with Dr. Johnson, and many years before, as I have been assured by those who knew him earlier, Mr. Levett had an apartment in his house or his chambers, and waited upon him every morning, through the whole course of his late and tedious breakfast. He was of a strange grotesque appearance, stiff and formal in his manners, and seldom said a word while any company was present' (*Life* 1. 243). He was an English waiter in a Parisian coffee-house when discovered by some French surgeons, who taught him orally what he knew of medicine. He died at nearly eighty, three years before Johnson's death, who missed him deeply through the rest of his life. See p. xxi.

10. *Obscurely wise*. Hill (*Life* 4. 138 n. 1) cites Addison, *Cato* 4. 3:

Content thyself to be obscurely good.

*Coarsely kind*. 'Levett, madam, is a brutal fellow, but I have a good regard for him; for his brutality is in his manners, not in his mind' (Mme. D'Arblay's *Diary*, 1778, near beginning).

32. *Eightieth year*. 'If you want events, here is Mr. Levett just come in at fourscore, from a walk to Hampstead, eight miles, in August' (*Letters* 2. 193).

35. 'Poor Levett died in his bed the other day, by a sudden stroke; I suppose not one minute passed between health and death; so uncertain are human things' (*Life* 4. 142). The night previous to Levett's death Johnson had resolved that wheresoever he might abide, he should keep Levett with him (*ibid.* 4. 145).

## LETTERS

366. *Strahan*. Printer of the *Dictionary*, and friend of Johnson. Apparently he is acting as intermediary between Johnson and the combined publishers of the *Dictionary*.

The publication was a trying business, since Johnson was desultory, as usual, and the money to be paid him had been advanced far beyond his performance of his task. Evidently he had asked for more and it had been refused unless he 'write' more copy. Johnson therefore threatens a strike.

When Johnson's messenger returned from delivering the last sheet of the book, Johnson asked him, 'Well, what did he say?' 'Sir (answered the messenger), he said, thank God I have done with him.' 'I am glad (replied Johnson, with a smile) that he thanks God for any thing' (*Life* 1. 287). For Johnson's terms with the publishers see p. 24.

366. 3. *Stuart*. One of Johnson's five Scotch amanuenses.

367. 1. 'Indeed I never did exchange letters regularly but with dear Miss Boothby' (*Letters* 1. 65). She was a lady of high breeding and piety, whom he had met in Derbyshire some fifteen years earlier. She died eight days after this letter was written, and perhaps never saw it. See *Letters* 1. 45-52.

367. 4. *Law*. Referring to one of William Law's works. His *Serious Call* was instrumental in the conversion of both Johnson and John Wesley.

367. 13. *Burney*. Dr. Charles Burney, father of Fanny Burney, the novelist and diarist; he was afterwards one of Johnson's dearest friends. See Johnson's last letter, p. 391.

368. 1. *New edition*. His *Shakespeare*, not published till 1765. Churchill laughed at the delay (*Ghost* 3. 801):

He for subscribers baits his hook,  
And takes their cash; but where's the book?

368. 16 ff. This, and the next five letters were written within the week of his mother's death, which occurred on January 20 or 21. She was ninety years old. She could hardly have read or heard more than two of these letters. Ten years before he was dreading her death as 'one of the few calamities on which I think with terror' (*Life* 1. 212, n. 1).

368. 18. *Miss*. Miss Lucy Porter, Johnson's step-daughter, who cared for Mrs. Johnson.

368. 31. *Debts*. *Rasselas* was written 'in the evenings of one week' soon after her death to earn the money for the discharge of these debts.

368. 34. *Twelve guineas*. Six, at least, were borrowed.

369. 11. *Kitty*. Catherine Chambers. See 394. 14, n.

372. 12. *The Earl of Bute*. Then Prime Minister. Johnson acknowledges the pension on the occasion of the first payment. See *London* 51, n.

373. 1. *Langton*. As a youth he had sought Johnson's acquaintance after reading *The Rambler*.

373. 19. *The Club*. The famous Literary Club, founded in 1764. See Boswell's account of it at the beginning of that year (*Life* 1. 477-81).

373. 29. *Maintained the newspapers*. His *Shakespeare* started a controversy among the critics.

373. 30. *Risen every morning*. A resolution, as he said, 'always occurring' (*Misc.* 1. 67). A week before he wrote: 'I have never, I thank God, since New Year's day deviated from the practice of rising' (*Misc.* 1. 37). Cf. 74. 19, n.

374. 1. *Dyer*. A quiet, but very learned member. Goldsmith was once talking loosely about music; at length, Dyer, on request, gave his opinion. 'Why,' said Goldsmith, 'you seem to know a good deal of this matter.' 'If I had not,' said Dyer quietly, 'I should not, in this company, have said a word upon the subject' (*Life* 4. 11, n.).

374. 2. *Nugent*. A Roman Catholic physician, Burke's father-in-law.

374. 12. Boswell had written complaining of Johnson's long silence, and worrying, as often he did, about the imagined falling off of Johnson's regard. He also proposed the tour in the Hebrides, which they took together two years later.

374. 30. '*Tristitiam*,' etc. Horace, *Odes* 1. 26. 1.

374. 34. '*Sive per*,' etc. *Ibid.* 1. 22. 5.

375. 2. *Lord Elibank*. A Scottish friend of Boswell's. He wrote: 'Old as I am, I shall be glad to go five hundred miles to enjoy a day of his (Johnson's) company' (*Life* 5. 181). And Johnson said: 'I was never in Lord Elibank's company without hearing something' (*ibid.* 3. 24).

375. 11. *Askbourne, Derbyshire*. Here his old school



friend Taylor had a fine seat, and hither he often came to visit. But he tired of the 'vacancy' of the life there. Cf. pp. 182 ff. Taylor bred fine cattle, and he and Johnson were very proud of his great bull.

**375. 31. Macpherson.** One of Johnson's most famous letters. In 1762 Macpherson had published *The Works of Ossian*, which, he insisted, were translated from manuscripts of the ancient Celtic poet's works. Johnson suspected a mere forgery and boldly said so in print, but no manuscripts were ever shown. Macpherson privately threatened Johnson with violence, and this letter of Johnson's 'put an end to our correspondence.' The two lie near each other in the Abbey.

**376. 15. Ralph.** Mrs. Thrale's son in his second year. He died a month later. Queeney, Harry, Susey, and Sophy, are her other children.

**Baretti.** Author, teacher of Italian, and friend of Johnson since about 1750. About 1770 he went to live at the Thrales', but quarreled and left in 1776.

**376. 25. Miss A—**, Hill suggests may be a Miss Adey, niece of Mrs. Cobb (see end of the letter). Both were 'great admirers' of Johnson (*Life* 2. 466). The other ladies are all old Lichfield friends, who entertain him whenever he returns to his native town. Stowhill was the home of Mrs. Aston, and of her sister Mrs. Gastrel. Lucy is his stepdaughter, Miss Porter.

**377. 3. Small letters.** About an epitaph for Mrs. Thrale's mother.

**377. 30. 'Suadentque,' etc.** Vergil, *Æn.* 2. 9; 4. 81. *Somnos* in Vergil.

**378. 12. Lord Auchinleck.** Boswell and his father had seldom been on good terms with each other; Auchinleck did not approve his son's pursuit of Johnson and other great men. The birth of an heir, however, has brought reconciliation.

**378. 15.** For Mrs. Boswell's dislike of Johnson see **379. 22, n.**, and p. xlviii; **282. 35, n.**

**378. 30.** Dr. Pearce, Bishop of Rochester, had contributed a few notes to Johnson's *Dictionary*. After his death was published a Biblical commentary, edited by a

Mr. Derby, for which Johnson, in gratitude to the memory of Pearce, wrote this dedication to the King. Though he never dedicated his own works, he often wrote dedications for others. 'He believed he had dedicated to all the Royal Family round' (*Life* 2. 2).

379. 22. Mrs. Boswell disliked Johnson from the time he visited Edinburgh in 1773. After four years she made overtures of peace in a little present, and Johnson acknowledges the reconciliation which he had long desired. See p. xliv; 282. 35, n.

381. The mock gravity of this letter is similar to that of *Rambler* No. 117, on life in a garret (p. 110).

381. 8. *Anch' io*. 'I, too, am a painter.' Correggio's exclamation at first seeing the works of Raphael.

382. 11. The 'debate' was a quarrel at Percy's house which arose over a discussion of Pennant's *Scotland*. They were in a few moments reconciled, and Boswell afterwards got Johnson to write this letter to remove any unfavorable impression of Dr. Percy in the mind of his relative, Lord Percy, who had been present. See *Life* 3. 271-78; cf. 225. 17, n.

383. 11. *Elphinston* was an old friend of Johnson's who had translated many of the mottoes from *The Rambler*. Eighteen years earlier Johnson had written to condole with him for the loss of his mother; see *Life* 1. 211. Johnson suffered most poignant distress at the death of his wife in 1752 (*Life* 1. 234-42).

383. 26. 'τον πρῶτον,' etc. Adapted, as Hill shows, from Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 3. 8. 'The Prime Mover, himself immovable.'

384. 9. *Lives*. *Lives of the Poets*.

384. 13. *Mitre*. The tavern in Fleet Street opposite Fetter Lane, whither they had gone soon after their first meeting eighteen years before. It was then Johnson's 'frequent place of resort . . . where he loved to sit up late' (*Life* 1. 399).

384. 20. Mr. Thrale had died April 4, and was buried the 11th. 'And with him were buried many of my hopes and pleasures . . . I felt almost the last flutter of his pulse, and looked for the last time upon the face that

for fifteen years had never been turned upon me but with respect or benignity' (*Miscellanies* 1. 96). Cf. the prayer on this occasion, p. 396.

385. Mrs. Williams and Mrs. Desmoulins made their home with him; cf. p. xxi; Frank Barber was his colored servant; for Levett, see 264 and notes; for Mrs. Cobb and Miss Adey, see 376. 25, n.

386. 1. Sir Joshua had had a slight paralytic stroke.

386. 19. *Mr. Crabbe's poem. The Village.* Crabbe had come to London in 1780. In the extreme of poverty and despair he appealed to Burke, who mentioned him to Reynolds, who called Johnson's attention to him. It was Crabbe's purpose to abolish fantastic nonsense about rural life and

paint the cot  
As truth will paint it, and as Bards will not.

387. 5. *Miss Sophy.* Mrs. Thrale's daughter, now fourteen.

387. 13. *Purpose to do more.* The thought of these sentences is abundantly illustrated in his *Prayers and Meditations*.

387. 21. *Metaphysics, romances.* Johnson loved both; see p. lv; 61. 13, n.

387. 28. *Dr. Taylor.* See 375. 11, n.

388. 10. *Mrs. Williams.* See 385. 16, n.

388. 18. *Mr. Hector.* Johnson's schoolfellow, with whom he lived six months after leaving Oxford.

388. 24. *Miss Jane* was his god-child, daughter of Bennett Langton (see 373. 1, and n.), now in her seventh year. Of this letter Boswell says: 'He took the trouble to write it in a large round hand, nearly resembling printed characters, that she might have the satisfaction of reading it herself' (*Life* 4. 271).

389. 7 ff. When Johnson first learned from Mrs. Thrale that she was to marry the Italian music-master, Piozzi, he wrote her a rough and impassioned remonstrance. She replied, asking him that, unless his opinion should change, their friendship of twenty years should cease. This letter is the reply. Mrs. Thrale was now a widow of forty, with

a number of children, and Johnson feared some disgrace in her marrying a foreigner and a Romanist.

389. 12. *I therefore breathe*, etc. Possibly an interpolation by Mrs. Thrale; it does not sound like Johnson. It was suspected by Baretti, but he hated Mrs. Thrale.

389. 33. *Irremeable stream*. Cf. Vergil, *Æn.* 6. 424, 'ripam irremeabilis undæ,' trans. by Dryden, 'the irremeable way.'

390. 11 ff. During Johnson's last summer Boswell, Reynolds, and others of his friends had, without Johnson's knowledge, applied to the Government, through the Lord Chancellor, for a gift of money which might enable Johnson to spend the winter in Italy. When Johnson heard of their kind efforts for him he broke down, and left the room (*Life* 4. 337). Churlow, when this endeavor failed, proposed another plan, whereupon Johnson wrote this letter.

391. 9 ff. This was Johnson's last letter. He had returned from his last visit to his friends in Lichfield, Ashbourne, and Oxford.

392. 1. Johnson's wife died March 28, 1752. His grief was agonizing. See *Life* 1. 234-40.

393. 6 ff. Three weeks later he began *The Idler*.

393. 27. Cf. his letters to his dying mother, pp. 368 ff.

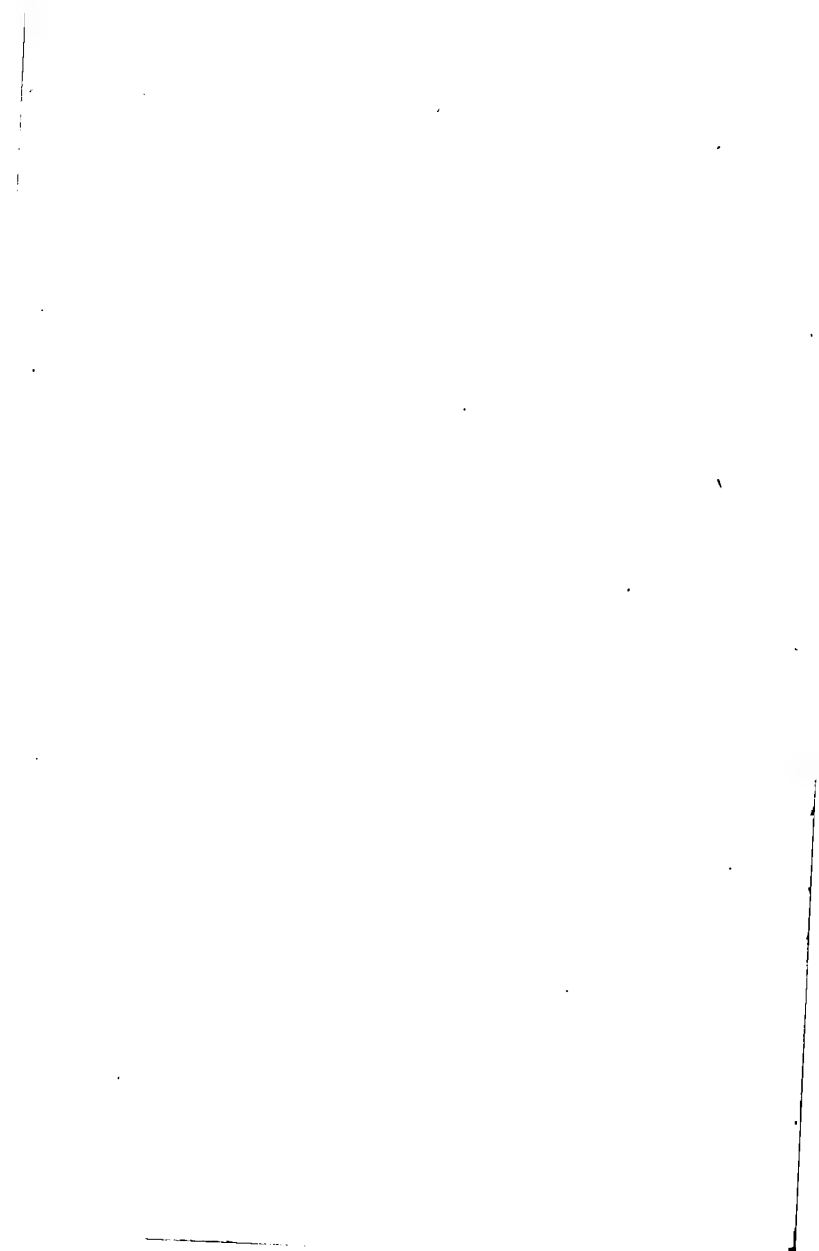
394. 14. *About 1724*. At the age of fifteen. Catherine Chambers and Johnson were of the same age. Johnson's father died in 1731, his brother in 1737, his mother in 1759. When his mother died he wrote: 'Tell Kitty that I shall never forget her tenderness to her mistress' (369. 11). She continued to live with Johnson's step-daughter at Lichfield.

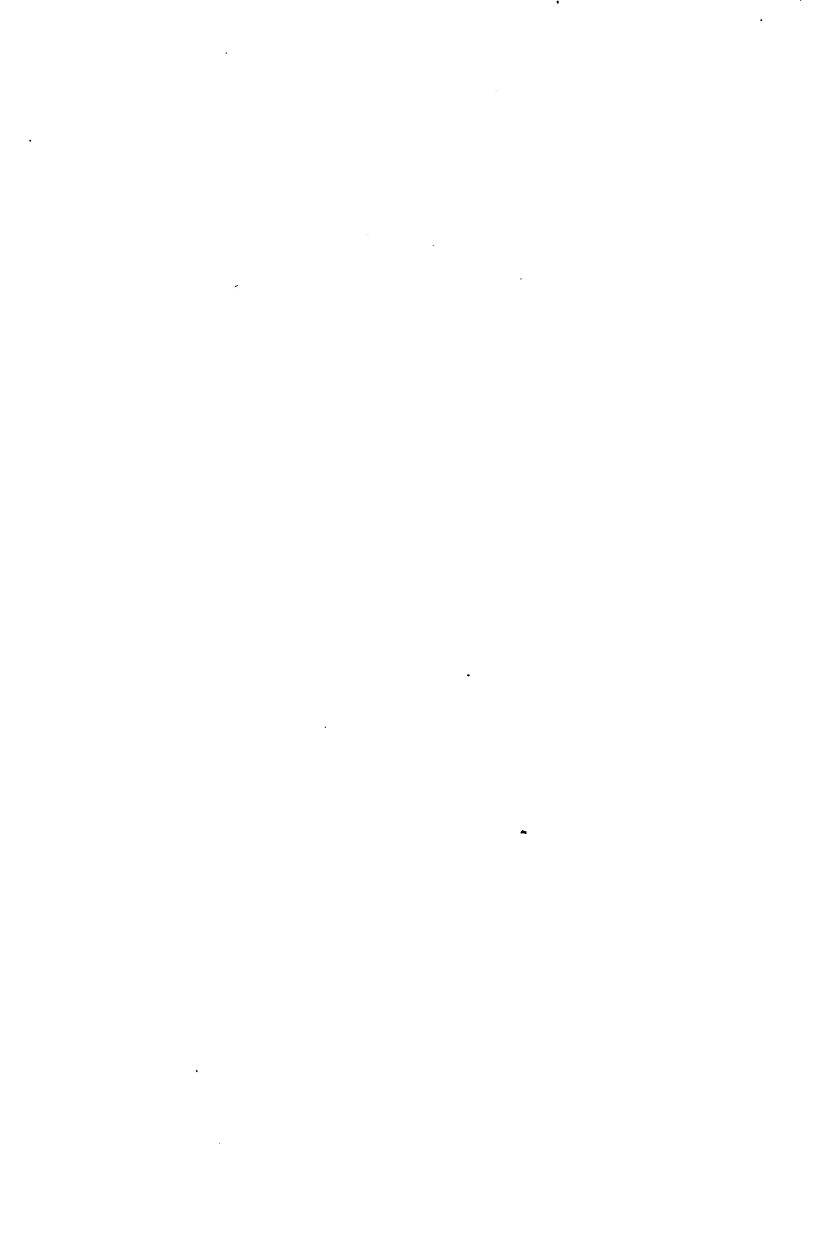
397. 4. Thrale died April 4. See Johnson's letter to Mrs. Thrale, 384, and note.

397. 30. Johnson died December 13.











“Reading  
maketh a full  
man, conference  
a ready man,  
and writing an  
exact man.”

*Bacon.*

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